

THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

DECEMBER 1895.

CLEG KELLY, ARAB OF THE CITY :

HIS PROGRESS AND ADVENTURES.¹

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ADVENTURE XXXVIII.

OF MISS BRIGGS AND HER TEN CATS.

'Now then, do you like it?' asked this frank young person. But Hugh Boy was silent as to what he thought of his first knowledgeable kiss. Not that it mattered, for the gay little lady rattled on regardless. 'And what is your name, little boy? You are very ragged, and you have come a long way. But you are clean, and Aunt Robina can't scold me, for she tells me to be kind to the poor, especially when they are quite clean.'

Boy Hugh bashfully answered that his name was Hugh Kavannah. 'And a very nice name it is, nice little boy!' the maid rattled on, heeding him but little, but loving the sound of her own twitter.

The children went over the moor together, till it began to feather into sparse birch-woods and thicker copses towards the plain. Sometimes as they went the little girl's hair whipped Boy Hugh's brow. He had forgotten all about Vara and the baby.

'Do they make you say your prayers in the morning as well as at night?' she asked; 'they do me—such a bother! Aunt Robina, she said last week, that it was self-denial week, and we must give up something for the Lord. So I said I did not mind giving up

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saying my prayers in the morning. "Oh but," said cousin Jimmy, "you must give up something you *like* doing." Horrid little boy, Jimmy, always blowing his nose—you don't, well, I don't believe you have a handkerchief—and Aunt Robina, she says, "Well, and what do you think God would say if you gave up saying your prayers?" "God *has* said already," I told her. "What has God said?" she wanted to know, making a face like this—. So I told her that God said, "Pray don't mention it, Miss Briggs." My name is Miss Briggs, you know. I have ten cats. Their names are Tom and Jim, and Harry and Dick, and Bob and Ben and Peter. But Peter's an awful thief."

She paused for breath and shook her head at the same time. Hugh Boy listened with the open mouth of unbounded astonishment.

"Yes, indeed," said Miss Briggs, "and I fear he will come to a bad end. I've thrown him into the mill-dam three times already, like Jonah out of the ship of Tarshish. Aunt Robina says I may play Bible stories on Sundays, you know. So I play Jonah. But he always gets out again. Next time I'm going to sit squash on him till he's dead. Once I sat on a nestful of eggs because I wanted some dear wee fluffy chickens—but I need not tell you about that. I got whipped, but Aunt Robina had to buy me a new pair of—oh, I forgot, I was telling you about wicked Peter. Peter is not a house-cat like the rest, you see. He is a bad, wicked cat. He lives in the barn or in the coach house and eats the pigeons. And he lies on the cows' backs on cold nights. But in the daytime Peter sleeps on the roof of the outhouses, and when any one of the other cats gets anything nice to eat, Peter comes down on them like a shot—."

"Oh aye!" cried Boy Hugh, excited to hear about something he understood, "I hae seen them do like that. Then there's a graund fecht, lying on their backs and tearing at anither wi' their claws, and spittin' and rowin' ower yin anither like a ba'—."

"My cats are not horrid creatures like that!" said Miss Briggs, in a dignified manner, "as soon as ever they see Peter coming they take to their heels and—oh, you should just see them run for the kitchen door! And their tails are just like the fox's brush that Aunt Robina dusts the pictures with. And then in a minute after you can see wicked Peter sitting on the rigging of the barn eating my poor darling house-cat's nice breakfast."

'Three cheers for Peter!' cried Hugh, who did not know any better than to express his real sentiments to a lady.

Miss Briggs instantly withdrew her hand from his. Her nose turned up very much, till its expression of scorn became almost an aspiration.

'I am afraid you are not such a nice little boy after all,' she said, severely.

As they went on together the children came to the very edge of the moorland. They ascended a few steps to a place where there were many tumbled crags and cunning hiding-places. From the edge of these they looked down upon a plain of tree tops, in the midst of which peeped out the front of a considerable mansion. The lower windows and the door were hidden in a green haze of beech leaves.

'That is where I live, little boy,' said Miss Briggs, grandly. 'The property will belong to me some day. And then I shall send Peter away for good.'

Miss Briggs looked down on the house and gardens with the eye of the possessor of a 'propriety.'

'Tissy, wissy—tissy—wissy!' she cried, suddenly forgetting her dignity.

There was a stirring here and there among the trees. And lo! from off the roofs of the barn and the byre, out of the triangular wickets, from off round-topped corn-stacks and out of different doors in the dwelling-house, there sprang a host of cats. 'See them,' said Miss Briggs, impressively, 'every one of them comes to meet me. That's Peter, wicked Peter,' she said, pointing to a large brindled pussy which led the field by half-a-dozen lengths. Over the bridge they came, all mewing their best, and all arching their tails.

'Their ten tails over their ten backs!' said Miss Briggs, as if she found much spiritual comfort in the phrase.

The cats rubbed themselves against her. Some of them leaped upon her shoulder and sat there, purring loudly. Hugh Boy was unspeakably delighted.

'I wish Vara could see,' he said, remembering for the first time his sister and Gavin.

A harsh voice broke in upon them.

'Elizabeth Briggs! Elizabeth Briggs! What is all this play-acting? And what gangrel loon is this that ye are bringing to the door by the hand? Is there not enough wastry and ruination

about the house of Rascarrel already, without your wiling hame every gypsy's brat and prowling sorrow of a gutter-bluid? Think shame o' yourself, Elizabeth Briggs!

Hugh Boy dropped the hand which held his. He would not bring disgrace on the friend who had helped him.

'Aunt Robina, you forget yourself,' interposed the young lady with prim dignity, 'and you forget "what sayeth the Scripture?"'

She took Boy Hugh's hand again, and held it tighter. 'Forget the Scripture,' cried a tall dark-browed woman who came limping out from a seat under a weeping elm. She was leaning heavily with both hands upon a staff, which she rattled angrily on the ground as she spoke.

'Yes,' said Miss Briggs, 'Do you not know that I am Pharaoh's daughter, and this is little Moses that I drew out of the water?'

'Hold your tongue, Elizabeth Briggs, and come here instantly!' said the dark woman, tapping the ground again with her staff.

Hugh Boy knew the tone. He had heard something like this before.

'Is that your "awfu' woman"?' he said aloud, pointing with his finger at the woman leaning upon the stick.

'Elizabeth Briggs,' she commanded again, pointing at the little girl with her stick, 'Come in to your lesson this minute. And you, whatever you may call yourself, take yourself off at once or I'll get the police to you!'

'Yes, do go away, nice little boy,' said Miss Briggs; 'but when you grow big, come back to the house of Rascarrel and Miss Briggs will marry you. And I will give you another kiss at the garden stile—and so will Peter!' she added. For she felt that some extra kindness and attention was due from her, to make up for the most unscriptural hardheartedness of her Aunt Robina.

So the children took their way together to the garden stile, and as they went out of sight, Boy Hugh turned round to the dark-browed woman:

'My name is Boy Hugh,' he said, 'but I'm not a beggar, awfu' woman!'

The children went slowly and sorrowfully along a gravel walk thickly overgrown with chickweed and moss. Their feet made no sound upon it. On either side box borders rose nearly three feet high, straggling untended over the walks. Still further over were territories of gooseberry bushes, senile and wellnigh barren, their thin-leaved, thorny branches trailing on the ground and crawling

over each other. Beyond these again was a great beech hedge rising up into the sky. Boy Hugh looked at the dark Irish yews standing erect at the corner of every plot. He thought they were like the sentinels at the gate of Holyrood, at whom he used to look as often as he could slip away from the Tinklers' Lands.

Then all suddenly and unexpectedly he began to cry. Miss Briggs stopped aghast. She was, like all womenfolk, well accustomed to her own sex's tears. But a male creature's emotion took her by surprise.

'What is the matter?' she said; 'tell me instantly, nice little boy.'

'This maun be heaven, after a,' said he, 'an' your awfu' woman winna let Boy Hugh bide.'

Presently they came out upon a circular opening where the bounding beech edge bent into a circle, and the gloomy yew tree sentinels stood wider about. Overhead the crisp leafage of the beeches clashed and rustled.

Here was a great garden seat of stone, and there at the back rose a fountain with stone nymphs—a fountain long since dry and overgrown with green moss. It seemed to Boy Hugh as if they could never get out of this vast enclosure.

There was also a little stone building at the end down the vista of the gravel walk. Its door stood open and Boy Hugh looked within. It was empty like a church. The floor was made of unpainted wood in squares and crosses. There were painted pictures on the walls, and a shining thing with candles standing upon it at the far end. Behind this the sun shone through a window of red, and yellow, and blue.

'Is that God?' said Hugh Boy, after gazing a long time at the glory of the shining crimson and violet panes and the shining gold upon the altar.

But Miss Briggs dragged him away without making him any answer.

Presently they came to half-a-dozen steps in an angle, which led over the outer wall. They had slipped under a mysterious archway of leaves and so through the beech hedge in order to reach this ladder of stone.

'Good-bye!' said Miss Briggs; 'remember—come back, nice little boy, as soon as you are growed up, and I will marry you. And then we will send Aunt Robina to the poorhouse. Kiss me, nice boy—and now kiss Peter.'

With that Miss Briggs disappeared, running as hard as ever she could, so that she would not need to cry within sight.

But as soon as she got to the great circle of the beeches and yews, she burst out sobbing. 'He was the very nicest boy—the nicest boy. But of course there could be nothing in it. For he is only a mere child, you know!'

But Boy Hugh walked stolidly up the steps, and so out of Paradise. 'I am very hungry!' he said.

ADVENTURE XXXIX.

THE ADVENTURE OF SNAP'S PORRIDGE.

BUT he found Providence just over the wall. For there sat Vara and there was the great stone behind which they had spent the night. All his wanderings had just brought him back to where he had started from. But for all that he was exceedingly glad to see Vara.

He called her, standing still on the top of the wall. She started up as if she had heard a voice from the grave. And the face which she turned to him was colourless like chalk.

'Wi' Vara,' said Hugh, 'what's wrang? Your face looks terrible clean?'

'O, Boy Hugh—Boy Hugh,' she cried, bursting into relieving tears, 'it's you. What a night you have given me!'

But not a word of reproach came from the lips of Vara Kavan nah. She had, indeed, enough to do to keep the babe quiet. For having run hither and thither over the moor looking for her brother, she had not had time to seek for any farmhouse where she could get some milk for Gavin's bottle.

In a little, however, they were again walking hand in hand, and Boy Hugh was pouring out all the story of his adventures in the Paradise of the House of Rascarral.

Chiefly he dwelt upon the divine beauty and abounding merits of Miss Briggs.

'Dinna you think she was an angel frae heeven?' said Boy Hugh.

'I think she was a nasty, wicked, enticing little monkey!' burst out Vara. For though it is part of womanhood's privilege to put up with the truancy of mankind without complaint,

it is too much to expect her to suffer gladly his praises of the Canaanitish women he may have colloqued with upon his travels.

And then Vara walked a long way silent and with her head in the air. Hugh Boy kicked all the stones out of his path and was silent also.

Nevertheless, though in this sulky silence, they travelled steadily on and on. Horizon after horizon broke up, spread out to either side, streamed dispersedly past them, and recomposed itself again solidly behind them.

'I'm awesome hungry!' at last said Boy Hugh, humbly. Vara became full of compassion in a minute.

'And Vara has nothing to give ye!' she said; 'poor Boy Hugh!'

The baby woke with a faint cry.

They had passed off the moor and were now come among inhabited houses again. They were just passing a little cottage which stood with its end to the road, as a little boy came out of the gate with a great bowl of porridge and milk in his hand.

'Snap! Snap!' he cried, and looked up and down the road. A small terrier pricked its ears briskly over a wall and then leaped down upon the road. 'Here, Snap!' cried the boy.

Snap came slowly walking down the dusty highway. He smelled at the dish of porridge and milk. Then he sniffed loudly upon the nose of contempt. For he had just been dining richly in the outhouse on a rat which he had killed himself.

Vara's eyes blazed at the sight of the porridge and milk.

'O, gie that to the baby!' she cried, her eyes fairly sparkling fire. 'Gie that to wee Gavin. The dog doesna want it!'

The little boy ran back into the house, crying out at the top of his voice, 'O, mither, mither, here's a lassie wants to gie our Snap's porridge to a babby!'

A kindly-faced, apple-cheeked country woman came to the door of the cottage. She had been baking cakes, and she dusted the oatmeal off her hands as she stood there.

'Can I get the dog's porridge for the bairns? He doesna want them. Deed he doesna!' cried Vara, beseechingly.

'Of course, lassie, ye can hae the porridge, and welcome!' said the woman, doubtfully.

'O, thank ye, mem, thank ye!' cried Vara, pouncing instantly on the porridge, lest the permission should be withdrawn. In a minute she had put most of the milk into the babe's bottle and the rest into the hands of Boy Hugh, who fell upon the porridge

unceremoniously with his fingers. Vara smiled as she looked. She was hungrier than either—but happy.

The woman stood watching the wolfish eagerness of the younger children at the sight of food with a strange look on her face. Her lip tightened and her eyes grew sterner. Suddenly Vara glanced up at her with frank blue Irish eyes, brightened by hunger and suffering. They looked through and through the woman at the door.

‘Mither,’ said the boy, ‘they’re eatin’ up a’ our Snap’s porridge, and there will no be a drap left——’

The woman turned on him with a kind of gladness.

‘Hold your tongue!’ she said, with quite unnecessary vehemence. And she slapped her son smartly for no particular reason. The tears were running down her cheeks. She almost dragged the children into the house. Then and there she spread such a breakfast for them as Vara had been seeing in her dreams ever since she grew hungry. It seemed that Gavin grew visibly plumper before her very eyes, with the milk which he absorbed as a sponge takes up water. And there appeared to be no finality to Boy Hugh’s appetite. He could always find room for just another scone, spread with fresh butter and overlaid with cool apple-jelly such as Vara had never in her life partaken of.

Vara herself was almost too happy to eat. But the kind woman pressed her and would not let her leave the table.

‘But I have naething to pay ye wi’!’ said Vara, whose soul was great.

‘Hoot, hear to the lassie! I wadna tak’ pay frae the Queen if she caaed in aff the road to drink a dish of tea. My man’s the Netherby carrier. But tell me what’s brocht ye here, wi’ sic a bairn?’

And Vara told her as much as was necessary.

‘To Liverpool to find your faither,’ said the woman. ‘Ye dinna stir a fit till the morrow’s morn, and then ye can get a ride wi’ our John as far as Netherby, at ony rate.’

Vara was more than grateful to her. She was the first person who had taken their quest seriously. So the carrier’s wife kept them till night, and helped Vara to give the baby and Hugh a bath. Then she made Vara strip herself, and shut the door upon her till the girl had enjoyed such a tubful of warm water as she had never washed in before. As Vara was finishing and rubbing her slender, wearied body and blistered feet with a soft towel, the carrier’s

wife opened the door. 'Put on these!' she said; 'they were my wee Gracie's, and I canna bear to keep them in the house.' Vara would have protested, but the woman shut the door with a slam.

When Vara came out, Gavin was sitting on the carrier's knees and plucking at his beard. For 'our John' had come in and heard their story. He was a wise carrier, and knew better than to attempt to interfere with his wife's benevolences. Then what was Vara's astonishment to find the babe also clad in a new frock, and giving rustling evidence of fresh underclothing. She could hear Boy Hugh's voice outside. He and Snap's master had made up the peace, and were now out somewhere about the barn, encouraging Snap to possess himself of another dinner of rat.

The woman's wonderful kindness went to Vara's heart.

'Ye shouldna, oh, ye shouldna!' she said, and bowing her head in her hands, she wept as she had never done in the worst of all her sufferings.

'Hoot! can ye no haud your tongue, lassie?' said the carrier's wife. 'So mony bairn's things were just a cumber and a thocht to me in this hoose. Our youngest (Tam there) is ten, an' we hae dune wi' that kind o' nonsense in this hoose. What are ye lauchin' at, guidman?' she cried, suddenly turning on the carrier, who had been quaintly screwing up his face.

'I wasna lauchin',' said 'our John,' his face suddenly falling to a quite preternatural gravity.

'They were juist a cumber and a care,' continued the carrier's wife. 'And they are better being o' some use to somebody.'

'Now ye will lie down and sleep in the back room, till the guidman starts on his round at five i' the mornin'.'

So the wearied children were put to bed in the 'back room,' and they fell asleep to the sound of psalm-singing. For the good carrier and his wife were praising the Lord. It is quite a mistake to suppose that most psalm-singers are hypocrites. Much of the good of the world is wrought by those who, being merry of heart, sing psalms.

ADVENTURE XL.

A NEW KIND OF HERO.

THEN with the morning came the new day. The bitterest blast was over for these small pilgrims. The night's rest, the clean clothes, the goodness of the kind carrier folk were new life to Vara. There

was brighter hope in her heart as the carrier's wife set them under the blue hood of the light cart, for her 'man' did not expect any heavy loads that day. The children, therefore, were to ride in the covered waggon. The good woman wept to let them go, and made Vara promise many a time, to be sure and send her a letter. As they went away she slipped half-a-crown into Vara's hand.

'For the baby!' she whispered, like one who makes a shame-faced excuse. And at that moment the carrier pretended to be specially busy about his harness.

But Hugh Boy had quarrelled again with Snap's master, and that enterprising youth sat on the fence opposite and made faces at the party, till his mother, turning round somewhat quickly, caught him in the act.

'Ye ill-set hyule,' said she, 'wait till I get ye!'

But her firstborn did not wait. On the other hand, he betook himself down the meadow with much alacrity. His mother's voice followed him.

'My lad, wait till bedtime. It'll dirl far waur then. "Warm backs, guid bairns!" I'll learn you to make faces ahint my back.'

And as Snap's master went down the meadow, the parts likely to be nocturnally affected began to burn and tingle.

And the thought of the interview she would have with her son in the evening did something to console the carrier's wife for the loss of the children to whom she had taken such a sudden liking.

The light cart went jingling on. The Netherby carrier whistled steadily as he sat on the edge of his driving-board, with his feet on the shaft. Every now and then he passed over a bag of peppermint drops to the children.

'Hae!' he said.

The Netherby carrier was a man of few words, and this was his idea of hospitality. Hugh Boy did not remember ever to have been so happy in his life. Kissing was very well in its way, though Vara had not been pleased when she heard of it. But it was nothing to sitting in a blue-hooded cart and hearing the click and jingle of brass-mounted harness. Now and then the carrier stopped at snug farm-houses, and went in to chaffer with the goodwife for her eggs. Then he left the horse in charge of Hugh Boy, and so completely won that small heart. When the carrier came out again, the farmer's wife mostly came too, and the bargaining and bantering were kept up as the cart receded from the door. Even when the blue-hooded cart was far down the loaning, a

belated and forgetful goodwife would come running to some knowe-top, and from that eminence she would proceed to give further directions for commissions from the town.

'Mind ye buy the thread at Rob Heslop's—no at that upstart sieffer's at the corner, wi' his wax figgurs an' his adverteesements. I dinna haud wi' them ava'!'

For there are still uncouth and outlandish parts of the country, where the medical axiom that it is wicked and unprofessional to advertise holds good in practical commerce. Now the road toward England does not run directly through Netherby, but leaves the town a little to one side with its many spires and its warring denominations. From the outside Netherby looks like a home of ancient peace. But for all that, there were hardly two neighbour shopkeepers down all its long main street who belonged to the same religious denomination—the only exceptions being Dickson the baker and Henderson the butcher. But Henderson and Dickson did not speak to one another, having quarrelled about the singing of paraphrases in the Seceder kirk.

However, the poor benighted Kavannahs did not know one kirk from another. And what is worse, indeed held almost criminal in Netherby, they did not care.

It was here at the parting of the roads that John the carrier took his leave of them. His farewell was not effusive.

'Weel,' he said, cracking his whip three times over, while he thought of the rest of his speech, 'guid-day. Be sure and come back and see us, as the wife bade ye. The sooner the better!'

But he put a shilling into Hugh's hand as they parted.

'For peppermints!' he said.

Vara did not know when she might come to another town on her way, so she decided to buy a loaf in Netherby before going further. For though they never asked for food, except when driven by hunger, as in the case of Snap's dinner, yet since the night on the moor she had resolved to ask for shelter if they came to any house at nightfall. So after the carrier was gone, with many charges Vara left Hugh in care of Gavin and went into the town to make her markets.

Hugh Boy sat a good while by the roadside, till the time began to pass very dully. Then he became interested in the trains which kept shunting and whistling behind him. So he carried Gavin to the side of the railway line, where he could just see the road by which Vara would return. He was quite sure that he could

not be doing any harm. Directly opposite there was a fascinating turn-table, upon which two men stood with iron poles in their hands wheeling round a great engine as if it had been a toy. This was really too much for Boy Hugh. Forgetting all about Vara's warning, he scrambled over the wire paling, and staggered across the netted lines in order to get a nearer view of the marvel.

But just at that moment up came the main line express twenty minutes behind time, and the engine-driver in a bad temper. And if Muckle Alick had not opposed the breadth of his beam to the buffer of Geordie Grierson's engine, this tale, so far at least as two of the Kavannahs were concerned, would have ended here. But when Muckle Alick gripped the children in his great arms, and made that spring to the side, the engine caught him so exactly in the right place that it did no more than considerably accelerate his lateral motion, and project him half-way up the bank. As has been recorded, Muckle Alick's first exclamation (which immediately became proverbial all over the Greenock and South-Eastern) was, 'Is there aught broke, Geordie, think ye?'

They talked of getting up a testimonial to Muckle Alick. But the hero himself strongly discouraged the notion. Indeed, he went so far as to declare that he 'wad gie the fule a ring on the lug that cam' to him wi' ony sic a thing!' This was a somewhat unusual attitude for a hero to assume in the circumstances. But it was quite genuine. And so well known was the horse-power of Alick's buffet, that it would have been easier to recruit a storming party in Netherby than a deputation to present a 'token of esteem' to the head porter at Netherby Junction.

In time, however (though this is somewhat to anticipate the tale), there came from the Royal Humane Society a medal, together with a long paper setting forth the noble deed of the saving of the children. No notice of this ever appeared publicly in the local prints, to which such things are usually a godsend.

For Alick immediately put the medal in the bottom of his trunk, beneath his 'best blacks' which he wore only twice a year, at Sacraments.

He had heard that the editor of the 'Netherby Chronicle and Advertiser' had collogued with the provost of the town to bring about this 'fitting acknowledgment.' Now Muckle Alick could not help the thing itself, but he could help people in Netherby getting to hear about it.

Muckle Alick called upon the editor of the 'Chronicle.' He

found him in, and engaged in the difficult task of penning an editorial which would not alienate the most thin-skinned subscriber, but which would yet be calculated to exasperate the editor of the opposition local paper published in the next county.

‘Maister Heron,’ said the head-porter, ‘I juist looked in to tell ye, that there’s nocht to come oot in the “Chronicle” aboot me the morn.’

‘But, my dear sir,’ said the editor, ‘the item has been specially communicated, and is already set up.’

‘Then it’ll hae to be set doon again !’ said Muckle Alick, firmly.

‘Impossible, impossible, I do assure you, my dear friend,’ remonstrated the editor. He was proprietor—editor and proprietor in one. Such editors in agricultural communities are always polite to subscribers.

‘But it’s no onpossible. It’s to be !’ said Alick—‘Or there’s no a paper will leave the junction the morn—aye, and there’ll no be a paper sell’t in this toon eyther.’

It was not clear to the editor how Muckle Alick could bring about this result.

‘But,’ said he, tapping the desk with his pen, ‘my dear sir, the stationmaster—the railway company—’

‘Ow aye, I ken,’ said Muckle Alick, ‘there wad be a wark aboot it after, nae doot. But it’s the morn I’m speakin’ aboot, Maister Heron. It is possible I might get the sack ower the head o’ it—(though I’m thinkin’ no). But that wadna help your papers to sell the morn.’ Alick paused to let this sink well in. Then he took his leave.

‘Noo, mind, I’m tellin’ ye. Guid day, Yedditur !’

That afternoon Alick presided at a gathering of the amalgamated paper boys of the town, being accredited representatives of all the various newsagents. The proceedings were private, and as soon as strangers were observed, the house was counted out (and stones thrown at them). But the general tenour of the resolutions passed may be gathered from the fact that when Mr. Heron heard of it, he ordered the junior reporter to ‘slate a novel’ just come in—a novel by an eminent hand. ‘It’s to make three quarters of a column, less two lines,’ he said.

So that we know from this, the length of the suppressed article on the presentation of a medal of the Royal Humane Society to ‘our noble and esteemed townsman, Mr. Alexander Douglas.’ The ‘Netherby Chronicle and Advertiser’ enjoyed its

normal circulation next day. And, after Muckle Alick had carefully searched every column of the paper, the parcels were forwarded from the junction with the usual promptitude and despatch.

But this is telling our tale 'withershins about,' as they say in Netherby. We return to Vara and her bairns.

ADVENTURE XLI.

'TWA LADDIES—AND A LASSIE.'

MUCKLE Alick trotted the children soberly down the street, and at the foot he turned his long lumbering stride up a country road. For Alick had a little wife who was an expert market-gardener and beekeeper.

Her name was Mirren, and her size, as reported by her husband, was 'near-aboots as big as twa scrubbers.' It was for her sake and because he could not help himself, that Muckle Alick lived so far from his work.

'D'ye think that because I hae to put up wi' a great hulk like you, comin' hame at nicht smellin' o' cinders and lamp oil, that I'm gaun to leeve in a hut amang the coal waggons? Na, certes, gin ye want to hae Mirren Tereggle to keep ye snug, ye maun e'en walk a mile or twa extra in the day. And it will be the better for keepin' doon that great muckle corporation o' yours!'

And that is the way that Muckle Alick Douglas lived out at Sandyknowes. It was to his small garden-girt house that he took the children.

'What's this ye hae fetched hame in your hand the nicht?' cried the little wife sharply, as she saw her husband come up the loaning. 'It's no ilka wife that wad be pleased to hae a grown family brocht in on her like this!'

'Hoot, Mirren woman!' was all that Muckle Alick said, as he pushed Vara and Hugh in before him, Gavin nestling cosily in his arms the while.

'Whaur gat ye them, Alick?' said Mirren, going forward to look at the bairn in his arms. 'They are bonny weans and no that ill put on.'

Little Gavin was so content in the arms of Muckle Alick that he smiled. And his sweetness of expression struggling through the pinched look of hunger went right to the heart of Mirren, who, having no bairns of her own—'so far,' as Muckle Alick remarked cautiously—had so much the more love for other people's. She

turned on Vara, who stood looking on and smiling also. The little woman was almost fierce.

‘What has been done to this bairn that he has never grown?’ said Mirren Douglas, wife of Muckle Alick.

Vara flushed in her slow still way, at the imputation that she had not taken good care enough of her Gavin—to pleasure whom she would have given her life.

‘I did the best I could,’ she said, ‘whiles we had to sleep oot a’ nicht, an’ whiles I had nae milk to gie him.’

‘Lassie! lassie!’ cried Mirren Douglas, ‘what is this ye are tellin’ me?’

‘The truth,’ said Vara Kavannah, quietly; ‘Gavin and Boy Hugh and me hae walked a’ the road frae Edinburgh. We hae sleepit in the hills, and—’

‘But how cam’ the bairn here?’ asked Muckle Alick’s fiercely tender little wife; ‘tell me quick!’

‘I hae carried Gavin a’ the road!’ said Vara, simply.

‘You, lassie!’ cried Mirren, looking at the slip of pale girlhood before her, ‘it’s juist fair unpossible!’

‘But I did carry him. He’s no that heavy when ye get the shawl weel set.’

‘O lassie, lassie, ye juist mak’ me fair shamed,’ cried Mistress Douglas. ‘Alick, ye muckle bullock; what for are ye standin’ there like a cuif? Gang ower to Mistress Fraser’s and ask the lend o’ her cradle. Thae bairns are gaun to bide—’

‘But, wife, hae ye considered?’ Alick began.

‘Considered, my fit, did ye no hear me? Dinna stand hingin’ there, balancin’ on your soles like a show elephant lookin’ aboot for cookies—gang, will ye!’

The little wife stamped her foot and made a threatening demonstration. Whereupon Muckle Alick betook himself over the way to Mistress Fraser’s, and he never smiled till he got past the gate of the front garden, in which Mirren kept her old-fashioned flowers.

‘I thocht that’s what it wad come to,’ said Alick to himself, ‘when she saw the bairns. I wonder if she means to keep haud o’ them a’ thegither? She’s been wearing her heart on the floers a lang while, puir lassie. It wad be a farce if three bairns cam’ hame at once to Sandyknowes after sae lang without ony, twa o’ them walkin’ cantily on their ain feet!’

Thus Alick mused, laughing a little to himself as he went over to borrow Mistress Fraser’s cradle. He had an idea.

‘There’ll be some amusement at ony rate,’ he said, ‘but I

maunna be ower keen. Na, and I maun haud back an' make difficulties. And then the wife will tak' the ither side and be juist daft to get her ain way and keep them.'

Alick was well aware of the value of a certain amount of opposition, judiciously distributed.

He arrived before long at the cottage of Mistress Fraser. It was set like his own in the midst of a garden. But instead of being bosomed in flowers, with beeskeps scattered about, the garden was wholly taken up with potatoes, cabbage, and curly greens. It was a strictly utilitarian garden. As soon as Muckle Alick hove in sight, turning up off the main road, a covey of children broke from the door of the house and ran tumultuously towards him. They tripped one another up. They pulled each other back by the hair, or caught those in front by the heels or the coat-tails. It was a clean-limbed, coltish lass of thirteen who gained the race and sprang first into the arms of Muckle Alick. Then two smaller boys gripped each a mighty leg, while a whole horde of smaller banditti swarmed up Alick's rearward works and took his broad back by storm. When he got to the potato garden he looked more like the show elephant his wife had called him than ever. For he was fairly loaded with children 'all along the rigging,' as Mistress Fraser said.

She was a buxom, rosy-cheeked woman, gifted upon occasion with an astonishing plainness of speech.

'Guidnight to ye, Alick,' she said, 'thae bairns maks as free wi' ye as if they were a' your ain?'

Alick disentangled the hands of one of the rearward harpies from his beard and mouth. Whereupon the offended rascal was not to be appeased. He slid down, caught the giant about the knee, and began to kick an outlying shin with all his might.

'Ye should ken best whether they are or no,' said Alick, 'there's plenty o' them at ony gait!'

'An' what wind has blawn ye awa' frae Sandyknowes this nicht? It taks naething less than an earthquake to shake ye awa' frae Mirren. Ye hae fair forgotten that there's ither folk in the warl.'

'I was wanting the lend o' your cradle, guidwife,' said Alick, with affected shamefacedness, well aware of the astonishment he would occasion by the simple request.

Mistress Fraser had been stooping over a basin in which she was mixing meal and other ingredients, to form the white puddings for which she was famous. She stood up suddenly erect, like a bow straightening itself. Then she looked sternly at Alick.

'Ye are a nice cunning wratch to be an elder—you and Mirren Terregles baith—and at your time o' life. An' hoo is she?'

'Ow, as weel as could hae been expectit,' said Muckle Alick, with just the proper amount of hypocritical resignation demanded by custom on these occasions. Mistress Fraser, whose mind ran naturally on the lines along which Muckle Alick had directed it, was completely taken in.

'An' what has Mirren gotten?—a lassie, I'll wager,' said the excited mother of eleven, dusting her hands of the crumblings of the pudding suet, and then beginning breathlessly to smooth her hair and take off her baking apron. So excited was she that she could not find the loop.

'Aye,' said Alick, quietly, 'there's a lassie!'

'I juist kenned it,' said Mistress Fraser, drawing up wisdom from the mysterious wells of her experience; 'muckle men and wee wives aye start aff wi' a lassie—contrarywise they begin wi' a laddie. Noo me and my man—'

What terrible revelation of domestic experience would inevitably have followed, remains unfortunately unknown. For the words which at that moment Muckle Alick delicately let drop, as the chemist drops a rare essence into two ounces of distilled water, brought Mistress Fraser to a dead stop in the fulness of her career after the most intimate domestic reminiscences.

'But there's a laddie come too!' said Muckle Alick, and looked becomingly at the ground.

Mistress Fraser held up her hands.

'Of a' the deceitfu', hidin', unneighbourly craiturs,' said Mistress Fraser, 'Mirren Terregles is the warst—an' me to hae drank my tea wi' her only last week. I'll wager if I live to hae fifty bairns—'

'The Lord forbid,' said her husband, unexpectedly, from the doorway. 'We hae plenty as it is—'

'And wha's faut's that?' cried his wife over her shoulder. 'Oh the deceitfu' randy—'

'In fact,' said Muckle Alick, dropping another word in, 'there's twa laddies—and a lassie!'

Mistress Fraser sat down quite suddenly.

'Gie me a drink frae the water can, Tam!' she said; 'haste ye fast, Alick's news has gi'en me a turn. Twa laddies and a lassie—I declare it's a Queen's bounty! Preserve me, it's no a cradle ye want, man, but a mill happier! A time or twa like this, and ye'll hae to plant tatties in the front yaird—ye will hae to pay

soundly for your ploy at this rate, my man. Three at a whup disna gang wi' cancy-lairies in the cabbage plots, my lad.'

'It's a maist notoriously curious thing,' began Tam Fraser, unexpectedly, 'that I saw Mirren carryin' twa cans o' water this very mornin'—'

Muckle Alick gave him a warning look, which made him catch his next unspoken sentence as a wicket-keeper holds the ball before the field has seen it leave the bat.

'But—but she didna look weel——' added Tam.

'I wad think no, juist,' cried Mistress Fraser, who in an inner room was busy putting a selection of small white things into a covered reticule basket. 'An puir Mirren, she'll no be ready for the like. Wha could be prepared for a hale nation like this—I'll tak' her what I hae. O, the deceitfu' besom—I declare it wad tak' a little to gar me never speak to her again.'

'Dinna do that!' said the hypocritical giant; 'think on her condeetion——'

'Condeetion, condeetion, quo' he—I wonder ye are no black ashamed, Alick Douglas. And nane o' the twa o' ye ever to say a word to me, that's your nearest neebour——'

'I gie ye my word,' said Muckle Alick, 'I kenned nocht aboot it till an hour or twa afore the bairns cam' hame!'

Mistress Fraser turned fiercely upon him.

'Weel, for a' the leers in this pairish—and there are some rousers—ye beat them clean, Alick Douglas—and you an elder amang the Cameronian kirk! Hoo daur ye face your Maker, to say nocht o' the kirk folk as ye stand at the plate on Sabbaths, wi' siccan lees in your mouth?'

'Come awa, man,' she cried from the door in her haste, 'I hae twa bagfu's o' things here. Tam, gang ower by to the Folds and up to Cowdenslack and borrow their twa cradles. They'll no be needing them for a month or twa—I ken that brawly—na, they are straightforrit women, and never spring the like o' this on puir folk to set them a' in a flutter!'

'I think a single cradle wad do. It was a' that Mirren asked for,' said Alick demurely; 'but please yoursel', Mistress Fraser, it is you that kens.'

'Yin,' cried Mistress Fraser, 'the man's gane gytie. Gin ye wull bring a family into the wrld by squads o' regiments, ye maun e'en tak' the consequences. Lod, Lod, three cradles a' rockin' at the same time in yae hoose, it will be like a smiddy—or a watchmaker's shop! It'll be fine exerceese for ye, Alick, my

man, when ye come hame at nichts—nae mair planting o' nasty-hurcheons and pollyanthies. But every foot on a cradle rocker, and the lassie's yin to pu' wi' a string. An' serve ye baith richt. O, the deceitfu' madam; wait till I get ower to the Sandyknowes !'

And Alick had to take his longest strides to keep pace with the anxious mother of eleven—to whom he had told no lie, though, as he afterwards said, he 'had maybes keeped his thumb on some balauds o' the truth.'

'It shows,' said Alick, 'what a differ there is atween the truth and the hale truth—specially when there's a reason annexed in the shape of a woman's imagination, that naturally rins on sic like things.'

But as they neared Sandyknowes it is not to be doubted that Alick grew a little anxious. His position would not be exactly a pleasant one, if, for instance, Mirren should suddenly come out of their little byre with a full luggie of milk. And it was about milking time.

'There doesna appear to be muckle steer aboot the place, for sicc an awfu' thing to hae happened so lately!' said Mistress Fraser.

'Na,' said the arch-deceiver Alick, making a last effort, 'we are tryin' to keep a' thing as quaite as possible.'

'And faith, I dinna wonder. *Gin the wives nooadays had ony spunk in them ava', ye wad be mobbed and ridden on the stang, my man!' Then her grievance against Mirren came again upon Mistress Fraser with renewed force, 'O, the randy, the besom,' she cried; 'wait till I get her!'

By this time they were nearing the door of Sandyknowes.

'I dinna think I'll come ben wi' ye the noo. I'll gang ower by the barn instead. There's some things to look to there, I mis-doubt,' said Alick.

Just then they heard Mirren's voice raised in a merry laugh. It was really at the tale of Boy Hugh and Miss Briggs, which Vara was telling her.

But the sound brought a scared look to the face of Mistress Fraser.

'She's lauchin', I declare!' she cried; 'that's an awesome bad sign. Guid kens hoo mony there may be by this time—'

And she fairly lifted her voluminous petticoats, and, with her bundles under her arm, ran helter-skelter for the door of Sandyknowes, more like a halfling lassie than a douce mother of eleven bairns.

Muckle Alick saw her fairly in at the kitchen door.

‘I think I’ll gang ower by to the barn,’ he said.

But he had not got more than half-way there when both leaves of the kitchen door sprang open, and out flew Mistress Fraser with the large wooden pot-stick or spurtle in her hand. Alick had admired her performance as she ran towards the house. But it was nothing to the speed with which she now bore down upon him.

‘It was like the boat train coming doon by the Stroan, ten minutes ahint time, an’ a director on board!’ he said afterwards.

At the time Muckle Alick had too many things to think about, to say anything whatever. He ran towards the barn as fast as he could for the choking laughter which convulsed him. And behind him sped the avenger with the uplifted porridge spurtle, crying, ‘O ye muckle leein’ deevil—ye blackguaird—ye cunnin’ hound, let me catch ye—’

And by the cheek of the barn door catch him Mistress Fraser did. And then, immediately after, it was Muckle Alick who received the reward of iniquity. But Mirren stood in the doorway with little Gavin in her arms and Vara and Boy Hugh at either side, and laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks in twin parallel rills.

‘Gie him his paiks, and soundly, Mistress Fraser; pink him weel. Hit him on the knuckles or on the elbows. Ye micht as weel hit Ben Gairn as try to hurt him by hitting him on the head!’

Alick was speechless with laughter, but Mistress Fraser exclaimed with each resounding stroke, ‘Twa laddies and a lassie! O ye vermin!—And me has sent to the Folds and the Cowdenslacks for twa cradles to mak’ up the three. Ye hae made a bonny fule o’ me. I’ll never hear the last o’ it till my dying day in this countryside. But, at ony rate, I take my piper’s pay in ha’pence out o’ your skin, my man Alick !’

ADVENTURE XLII.

MUCKLE ALICK CONSIDERS.

‘Noo that the collyshangie’s dune,’ quoth Mirren Douglas, ‘ye micht gie us a word o’ advice what we should do wi’ the bairns. But come oot by. They are a’ to their beds doon the hoose. And we can be takin’ a look at the blossoms as we gang.’

‘We are to plant cabbage here next year, Mistress Fraser says !’ cried Muckle Alick.

'Havers!' said his wife. But Mistress Fraser gave Alick a look which said as plain as print, 'Have you not had enough?'

'Heard ye what the name o' the puir wandering things might be?' asked Mistress Fraser.

'Aye,' said Mirren, briskly, 'I hae heard a' aboot it. Their name is Kavannah. Their faither gaed awa' to Liverpool a whilie since to seek wark. And the bairns has left their mither in Edinburgh to seek their faither. And I judge their mither is a gye ill yin.'

'Did she tell ye that?' asked Muckle Alick, quickly.

'Na, but I jalloused it!'¹ said his wife.

'And hoo in the world could ye jallouse sic a thing as that?' said he.

'Just the way ye jallouse that the express is comin' when ye hear the whistle, and the signal draps to "clear," ye muckle nowt!' said his wife, taking what is known as a personal example.

'The lassie didna tell me yae single word, but the boy showed me an *arr*-mark on his temple. "The awfu' woman did that!" says he.'

'"And wha's the awfu' woman, my bonny man?"' says I.

'The lassie tried to turn him, but he oot wi' it. "It's just my mither!" says he. And if ye didna caa that a gye near signal, I ken na what is. It's as plain as findin' bits o' a dog collar in the sausage or a burn troot in the milk!'

But her husband did not laugh, as he usually did at her sayings. His own humour was not of that kind, but slow, ponderous, and deliberate.

'What are ye standin' there gapin' at?' demanded his wife.

Alick held up his hand. His wife knew that this was a signal that he wished to be left to think undisturbed a little longer. So she hurried Mistress Fraser along to look at what she called her 'nasty-hurcheons.' Sandy's mental machinery, like his bodily, was slow to set in motion, but it worked with great momentum when once it was set a-going.

Muckle Alick was putting two and two together.

'I ken a' aboot it,' he said at length, when the process was complete. 'We will need to be awesome careful. Thae bairns' faither never got to Liverpool; consequently it's little use them gaun there to seek him. He's either in his grave or the Edinburgh Infirmary. D'ye mind yon tramp man that gat the hurt in

¹ Shrewdly suspected it.

his head last spring, by hidin' and sleepin' in the cattle waggons when they were shuntin'? His name was James Kavannah. I'se warrant he was the bairns' faither!'

Mirren Douglas gave Muckle Alick a bit clap on the shoulder.

'Whiles ye are nane so stupid, man,' she said, 'I believe ye are richt.'

'And he was on his road to Liverpool, too,' added Alick, 'for when he was oot o' his mind he cried on aboot that a' the time. And aye the owerword o' his sang was "She'll no get me in Liverpool!"'

His wife looked at Alick. And Muckle Alick looked at Mirren.

'We'll keep them awhile, onyway, till they can get a better hame. The lassie will soon be braw and handy,' said Mirren.

'I'm thinkin',' said Alick, 'that the flower-beds will hae to come up after a', and we'll plant tatties if the porridge pot shows signs o' wearin' empty.'

It was thus that our three wanderers found a place of lodgement in the wilderness in the kindly house of Sandyknowes.

'There's my sister Margaret up at Loch Spellanderie,' said Mistress Fraser; 'she was tellin' me on Monday that she was wantin' a lass. She's no very easy to leeve wi', I ken. But she will gie a guid wage, and the lass would get an insight into country wark there. It might be worth while thinkin' aboot.'

'It is kind o' ye to think o't,' said Mirren, doubtfully.

'O,' replied Mistress Fraser, 'I'm nane no sure o' that. As I tell ye, oor Meg is nane o' the easiest to serve. But, as the guid Buik says, it's a good and siccar lesson for the young to bear the yoke in their youth.'

'An' I'm sure tha'e puir bairns hae had their share o't,' said Muckle Alick.

'I suppose,' said Mistress Fraser, as she prepared to take her leave, 'that ye canna keep your thumb on the joke aboot the twa laddies and a lassie. Na, it's no to be expected o' you, Mirren. It's ower guid a tale to tell, specially on me, that aye prided mysel' on letting naebody draw my leg. But ye did me to richts this time, ye great stirk—to bring me fleein' ower here wi' my coaties kilted as if I had the back-door trot, a' to see three newly-come-hame bairns, and the auldest o' them near woman muckle. And the loon that gaed me the cheat an elder o' the kirk! Sorrow till ye, Alick, but I could find it in my heart to clour your lugs even yet.'

'Ye hae my richt guidwull,' said Mirren, encouragingly.

But Muckle Alick only laughed. Then Tam Fraser came in seeking his wife.

'I hae been hearin' a' aboot your daft ploy, rinnin' in front o' the engine and gettin' dunted oot o' the road,' said he. 'Some folk was threepin' that it was awesome brave o' ye, but I think it was juist a daft, rackless triflin' wi' Providence. That's my thocht on't.'

'What was that? I hae heard tell o' it for the first time,' said Mirren. 'But that's nae new thing in this hoose. Alick's married wife is aye the last to hear o' his daft-like doin's.'

'O, nocht very special this time,' said Tam Fraser. 'He only threw a hundred and six Irish drovers oot o' a third story window ower the engine o' the Port express, but there's nae mair than ten o' them dead. And then he loup'd in front on an engine gaun at full speed and to draw some bairns frae below the wheels,' said Tam Fraser, giving the local version, corrected to date.

'Is this true?' said his wife severely, fixing her eyes upon Alick with a curious expression in them.

'There's juist aboot as muckle truth in it as there is in maist Netherby stories for common, after they hae gotten ten minutes' start,' said Muckle Alick.

'What is your version o't?' said his wife, never taking her eyes off her husband.

'O, it was naething to tell aboot,' said Muckle Alick. 'There was some drovers in a carriage where they had nae business, and they wadna come oot, till I gaed in to them—and then they cam' oot! And the wee laddie an' the bairn were comin' alang the line afore the engine. And Geordie couldna stop. So I gied them a bit yirk oot and gat a dunch in the back wi' the buffer.'

Mirren took her husband by the rough velveteen coat-sleeve.

'My man!' she said, rubbing her cheek against it. 'But what for did ye no tell me?'

'I was gaun to tell ye the morn's mornin',' said Alick. 'There was nae harm dune, ye see, but yin o' my gallus buttons riven off an' the buffer of Geordie's engine smashed. I was gaun to tell ye in the mornin' aboot the button needing sewin' on.'

'Did ye ever see siccán auld fules?' said Tam Fraser, as he and his wife went home, 'rubbín' her cheek again his airm, that's as thick as a pump theekit frae the frost wi' strae rapes?'

'Haud your tongue, Tam,' said his wife, whose temper had suffered; 'if I had a man like that I wad rub my cheek against his trouser leg, gin it pleased him, the day by the length.'

ADVENTURE XLIII.

TOWN KNIGHT AND COUNTRY KNIGHT.

MR. CLEG KELLY awoke early on the day upon which he was to make the bold adventure of getting to Netherby Junction without enriching the railway company by the amount of his fare. But his conscience was clean ; he was going to work his passage. It is true that neither the general manager nor yet the traffic inspector had been consulted in the matter. But for the sake of Cleg's friend (to be exact, Cleaver's boy's sweetheart's fellow-servant, cook at Bailie Holden's), Duncan Urquhart was willing (and he believed able) to engineer Cleg's passage to Netherby without fee or reward.

Duncan was friendly with the guard of his goods train, which is a thing not too common with those who have to run goods trains together, week in and week out. The shunting at night in particular is wearing to the temper, especially in the winter time, when it is mostly dark in an hour or two whenever your train happens to start.

‘Can you stand there and turn a brake?’ said Duncan to Cleg, setting him in a small compartment by himself ; ‘screw her up whenever we are running downhill. Ye will ken when by the gurrring and shaking.’

Mr. Duncan Urquhart was a very different man during the day, to the gay and gallant evening caller who had won the easy-melted heart of the cook at Holden's—which a disappointed suitor once said bitterly was made of dripping. He was very grimy ; he spoke but seldom, and then mostly in the highly imaginative and metaphorical language popular on the Greenock and South-Eastern. Duncan Urquhart, as has already been mentioned, was quite a first-class swearer, and had an originality not common among engineers, which he owed to his habit of translating literally from the Gaelic. Also, though he swore incessantly, he never defiled his mouth with profanity, but confined himself assiduously to personal abuse, which, if less sonorous, is infinitely more irritating to the swearee.

So hour after hour Cleg stood in the train and was hurled and shaken southwards towards Netherby. He helped at the shunting, coupling, and uncoupling with the best. For, from his ancient St. Leonard's experience, he could run the coal-waggons to their

lies as well as a professional. And though his occupations had been varied and desultory, Cleg was a born worker. He always saw merely the bit of work before him, and he set his teeth into it (as he said picturesquely) till he had clawed his way through.

Thus it was that Cleg found himself at Netherby Junction one Saturday night at six o'clock. It was the first time he had ever been further than the confines of the Queen's Park. And his vision of the country came to him as it were in one day. He saw teams driving afield. He saw the mowers in the swathes of hay. He watched with keen delight the grass fall cleanly before the scythe, and the point of the blade stand out at each stroke six inches from under the fallen sweep of dewy grass.

'Netherby Junction! Guidnicht!' said Duncan Urquhart, briefly. He had an appointment to keep with the provost's cook, who was also partial to well-bearded men with blue pilot-cloth jackets. Duncan would not have been in such a hurry, but for the fact that it took him half an hour to clean himself. He knew that half an hour when you go a-courtin', and when the other fellow may get there first, is of prime importance.

Now, as Cleg Kelly stepped out upon the cattle-landing bank, he caught a glimpse of the biggest man he had ever seen, walking slowly along the white dusty road which led out of the passenger station. He was swinging his arms wide of his sides, as very big and broad men always do.

Cleg sped after him at top speed and took a tour round him before he spoke. The big man paid no attention, walking with his eyes fixed on the ground.

'Are ye the man that pitched oot the drovers?' said Cleg at last, coming to anchor in front of the giant.

Muckle Alick stopped in the road, as much surprised as though the town clock had spoken to him. For Cleg put a smartness and fire in his question to which the boys about Netherby were strangers.

'Where come ye frae?' he said to Cleg.

'I come from Edinburgh to see Vara Kavannah,' said Cleg. 'Is she biding wi' you?'

'She was, till yestreen,' said Alick.

'And where is she noo?' said Cleg, buckling up his trousers.

'She is gane to serve at Loch Spellanderie by the Water o' Ae!' said Alick.

'And how far might that be?' asked Cleg, finishing his preparations.

'Three mile and a bittock up that road!' said Muckle Alick, pointing with his finger to a well-made dusty road which went in the direction of the hills.

'Guidnight!' cried Cleg, shortly. And was off at racing pace, Muckle Alick watched him out of sight.

'That cowes a'!' he said, 'to think that I could yince rin like that to see a lass. But the deil's in the loon. He's surely braw an early begun!'

Then Muckle Alick went round and told his wife.

'It will be the laddie frae Enbra that got them the wark in the mill, and gied up his wood hut to the bairns to levee in. What for did ye no bring him to see Hugh Boy and the bairn?'

'I dinna ken that he gied me the chance,' said Aleck. 'He was aff like a shot to Loch Spellanderie. I wad gie a shilling to hear what Mistress McWalter will say to him when he gets there. I houp that it'll no make her unkind to the lassie! If it does, I'll speak to her man. And at the warst she can aye come back to us. At a pinch we could be doing without her wage!'

'Aweel,' said his wife, 'the loon will be near there by this time.'

And the loon was.

Cleg was just turning up over the hill road towards Loch Spellanderie, when he heard that most heartsome sound to the ear of a country boy—the clatter of the pasture bars when the kye are coming home. It is a sound thrilling with reminiscences of dewy eves, or heartsome lowsing times, of forenichts with the lasses, and of all that to a country lad makes life worth living.

But to Cleg the rattle of the bars meant none of these things. Two people were standing by the gate—a boy and a girl. Cleg thought he would ask them if this was the right road to Loch Spellanderie.

But as he came nearer he saw that the girl was Vara herself. She was in close and, apparently, very friendly talk with a stranger—a tall lad with a face like one of the white statues in the museum, at which Cleg had often peeped wonderingly on free days when it was cold or raining outside.

'Vara!' cried Cleg, leaping forward towards his friend.

'Cleg! What are you doing here?' said Vara Kavannah, holding out her hand.

But there was something in her manner that froze Cleg. He had come with a glowing heart. He had overcome difficulties.

And now she did not seem much more glad to see him than she had been to talk with this young interloper at the gate of the field.

'This is Kit Kennedy,' said Vara, with a feeling that she must by her tactfulness carry off an awkward situation.

'O it is, is it?' said Cleg, ungraciously.

Vara went on hastily to tell Cleg about the children—how well and how happy they were, how Gavin was twice the weight he had been, how Hugh Boy ran down the road each night to meet Muckle Alick, and how she was now able to keep herself, besides helping a little to support Hugh and Gavin also.

Cleg stood sulkily scraping the earth with the toe of his boot. Kit Kennedy left them together, and was going off with the cows towards the byre. He had seen a tall, gaunt woman, who was not to be trifled with, walking through the courtyard, and he knew it was time to take the kye in.

Vara stopped talking to Cleg somewhat quickly. For she also had seen Mistress McWalter. She walked away towards the farm. Cleg and Kit were left alone.

Quick as lightning Cleg thrust his arm before Kit Kennedy's face.

'Spit ower that!' he said.

Kit hesitated and turned away.

'I dinna want to fecht ye!' he said, for he knew what was meant.

'Ye are feared!' said Cleg, tauntingly.

Kit Kennedy executed the feat in hydraulics required of him.

'After kye time,' said he, 'at the back o' the barn.'

Cleg nodded dourly.

'I'll learn ye to let my lass alone!' said the town boy.

'I dinna gie a button for your lass, or ony ither lass. Forbye there was nae ticket on her that I could see!' answered he of the country.

'Aweel,' said Cleg; 'then I'll warm ye for sayin' that ye wadna gie a button for her. I'm gaun to lick ye at ony rate.'

'To fecht me, ye mean?' said Kit Kennedy, quietly.

Thus was gage of battle offered and accepted betwixt Cleg Kelly and Kit Kennedy.

(To be continued.)

OUR EARLY FEMALE NOVELISTS.

IN the history of English story-telling an altogether notable place is occupied by Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales.' They are remarkable not only as masterpieces of narrative, but as containing both description of incidents and delineation of manners; not only as triumphs of literary expression, but as giving artistic form both to the romance of chivalry and to the tale of common life. Wholly wonderful it is that at so early a period such directness of movement and perfection of style, such vividness of portraiture and realism of incident, are found in verse, while centuries pass before similar excellences are found in prose. It is, indeed, peculiarly interesting to contrast Chaucer's practice with the subsequent course of English fiction. He sets his wits against the absurdities of the popular metrical romance, and jingles gaily along in the *Rime of Sir Thopas till Harry Bailey*, whose 'eeres aken with the drasty speche,' pulls him up with an impatient 'no more of this for Godes dignitee,' but the merry ridicule glanced harmlessly from the garrulous tellers of long-winded stories, who continued to delight many generations of auditors: the seventeenth century loved such romances as Boyle's 'Parthenissa,' and patient readers traced to the abrupt close its devious wandering in the regions of interminable talk and episode. When Chaucer abandoned his burlesque and took up the heavy tale of Melibeus, he inflicted on his audience a sample of that allegorical didacticism which long clung like a burr to the skirts of prose fiction; throughout mediaeval times the allegory followed hard after the story-teller and compelled him to moralise. In view, however, of the early course of English fiction, the most interesting feature in the 'Canterbury Tales' is their intense realism, their free transcription of the actual life of ordinary folk. They abound in that unconventional treatment of man which Thackeray praised in Fielding and desiderated in the modern novel, and illustrate to the full Carlyle's words, 'the poet, we imagine, can never have far to seek for a subject: the elements of his art are in him and around him on every hand.' But the prose story-tellers were slow to take the lesson to themselves; till the seventeenth century they made only sporadic and short-lived visits to the firm mainland of

nature; they preferred to dwell on the floating islands of legend and romance. In the seventeenth century, however, writers seem to have become fully alive to the interest peculiar to real life, and there appear faint foreshadowings of the modern novel.

The Duchess of Newcastle has some claim to honourable mention for her 'CCXI. Sociable Letters' (1664). This lady, whom, in her own delightful language, 'it pleased God to command His servant Nature to endue with a poetical and philosophical genius,' was genius enough to see that letters to be readable need not be authentic, and so to secure the credit of being the first to employ a device that since her time has played a large part in prose fiction. She may be allowed, therefore, to introduce the women novelists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; she herself would doubtless lay some stress on her tales in prose as giving her a title to rank among the very earliest novel-writers, but the Illustrissima Heroina (to quote one of the many flattering titles bestowed on her) is not at her best in such performances as 'The Converts in Marriage.' A much more important figure in the beginnings of the English novel is Mrs. Aphra Behn (1640-1689), whose personal history is quite as interesting as any of her stories. Her father, a Mr. Johnson, had influence enough to get himself appointed lieutenant-general of Surinam, and he set sail for the New World, taking his wife and children with him. Mr. Johnson did not live to see the regions he had been sent to rule, but his wife and children spent some years in the beautiful and romantic scenery of Surinam, and there Aphra found the materials of her best novel, 'Oroonoko.' The time had not yet come when description of Nature was a recognised feature in a story, but 'Oroonoko' contains one or two passages where an attempt is made to reveal to the people of England the beauties of Surinam. These passages have been praised for their 'careless and picturesque power,' but possibly the second epithet is less deserved than the first. Moreover, one is bound to say that Mrs. Behn's imagination is apt to enter into the record of her experiences. When after her return to England she had the honour of telling her adventures to Charles II., she included among the fauna of South America snakes of terrific dimensions, but a certain licence has always been accorded to the retailers of snake stories. Her most extraordinary traveller's tale is her account of what she saw on her voyage from Antwerp to England. How many among those that go down to the sea in ships have seen floating on the waves 'a

four-square floor of various coloured marble, from which ascended rows of fluted and twisted pillars, embossed round with climbing vines and flowers, and waving streamers, that received an easy motion in the air; upon the pillars a hundred little Cupids clambered with fluttering wings'! Little wonder, surely, that following the disappearance of this strange pageant came a violent storm, and Aphra and her companions suffered shipwreck. There is room for doubting whether Mrs. Behn put into any of her stories as much imagination as adorns the annals of her adventures. For her peculiar claim to attention is that at a time when the heroic romance was in fashion, she went for her characters and incidents to real life. When she appeared in London after her sojourn in Surinam, her good looks, her ready wit, and her lively conversation carried society by storm. She is described as 'a handsome dark girl, with a clear forehead, fine eyes, a full and merry mouth, an animated though voluptuous countenance, and a quick and ready tongue.' The merry monarch himself was charmed with the vivacious Astræa, and asked her to give to the world the moving narrative of the slave prince 'Oroonoko.' This is her best novel, and is in fact a striking book. Its sympathetic story of the high-souled African treacherously lured to the ignominy of slavery, of the sad fate of his faithful Imoinda, and of his own most cruel death, was possibly more rousing than even 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' and its power to touch the heart was greatly increased when Southerne dramatised and presented to the eyes of excited audiences the horrors of slavery. When Mrs. Behn's shortcomings are remembered against her, 'Oroonoko' should be put to her credit; it is instinct with real feeling and womanly sympathy. 'If,' says Miss Kavanagh, 'if she erred grievously, if she offended delicacy and morality itself by pictures not merely coarse but corrupting, it must never be forgotten that in this sense of the heroic, of all that is noble and manly, she was truly great; whether she invented or merely appreciated "Oroonoko," her merit is none the less.' In London the lively Astræa was besieged with suitors, but though her 'Letters to a Gentleman' show that when her feelings were really moved she was quite reckless, she was as a rule well able to take care of herself; and she fixed on the oldest, Mr. Behn, a rich London merchant of Dutch origin, who presently died and left her to widowhood and competence. In 1666 Aphra was sent by the King to Holland to watch the movements of the Dutch, and making Antwerp her head-quarters she set to work with consider-

able skill. Among her Dutch admirers was a Van der Albert, a man of position and importance, out of whom she wormed that De Witt and De Ruyter were planning an attack on the English shipping in the Thames. This vital news was at once sent to England only to be ridiculed, and Mrs. Behn, disgusted at the stupidity of the English ministers, turned from politics to domestic intrigue. Her handling of her Dutch lovers, Van der Albert and Van Bruin, is full of the boisterous, broad fun that riots in her best comedies, though it is conspicuously absent from her novels. They prefer the tragic and the sentimental, though it should be noted that 'The Adventures of the Black Lady' has a distinctly comical ending. At Antwerp Mrs. Behn got the groundwork of her second best novel, 'The Fair Jilt,' the history of a depraved and heartless coquette. Her disfame as a dramatist has been handed down in Pope's well-known line—

The stage how loosely does *Astrea* tread,

and no defence can be offered for the gratuitous indecency of her plays: she certainly did her best to add to the iridescent filth of the Restoration drama. But her novels are not to be put on the same black list: they are indelicate and coarse, it is true, but not to an extent that outraged contemporary taste. While the plays treat of mere animal passion, the novels teach that women do not deserve to prosper when they are false to true love. In addition to their realism, these novels possess the merit of lively narrative, and make some attempt to portray distinct characters and to analyse emotion.

As has already been suggested, there was realism before the day of 'Oroonoko'; very striking examples indeed are found in some of the Elizabethan writers: it did not become a fashion, but showed itself only intermittently and tentatively. On the other hand, its appearance in Mrs. Behn's stories marked the beginning of a reign that lasted far into the eighteenth century; by that time the inevitable reaction had set in, and the swing of the literary pendulum revived romanticism and gave birth to the School of Terror. A writer that floated high on the rising tide of realism, and in her lifetime achieved both notoriety and reputation, was Mrs. Delarivière Manley. Her importance in her own world is attested by the frequent occurrence of her name in contemporary literature, and the notice taken of her by men of letters. For her tragedy of 'Lucius,' Prior wrote the epilogue; in Pope's charming

burlesque, when the Baron carries off 'the sacred hair,' he assigns to himself an immortality equal to that of Mrs. Manley's famous budget of scandal.

As long as 'Atalantis' shall be read,

So long my honour, name, and praise shall live.

In Swift's 'Journal to Stella' there are noticeably frequent references to Mrs. Manley—not always complimentary, for he thinks ill both of her spelling and of her personal appearance. Under date January 26, 1711-12, he writes: 'Poor Mrs. Manley, the author, is very ill of a dropsy and sore leg; the printer tells me he is afraid she cannot live long. I am heartily sorry for her; she has very generous principles for one of her sort, and a great deal of good sense and invention. She is about forty, very homely, and very fat.' An earlier passage in the 'Journal' testifies to her readiness of pen: 'I forgot to tell you that yesterday was sent me a narrative printed, with all the particulars of Harley's stabbing. I had not time to do it myself, so I sent my hints to the author of "Atalantis," and she has cooked it into a sixpenny pamphlet in her own style.' Of this once well-known writer there is little good to say: her life was vicious, and so are her books. Finding people eager to read what was true, or might be true, she fed 'the better vulgar' with a succession of scandalous memoirs and very indecent stories. Her 'Atalantis' (1709), a grossly immoral book, which satirised with merciless freedom many of the best-known personages of the day, had a great vogue, its prurient gossip attracting readers with a taste for literary carrion. It brought the author within reach of the law; but the legal proceedings failed of their intent, both retrospective and prospective, and Mrs. Manley continued to make highly-seasoned revelations about herself and about other people. Among her revelations is her opinion of her personal appearance. Speaking of herself under the fictitious name of 'Rivella,' she says: 'Till she grew fat there was not, I believe, any defect to be found in her body; her lips admirably coloured, her teeth small and even; a breath always sweet; her complexion fair and fresh. . . . Her hands and arms have been publicly celebrated: it is certain that I never saw any so well turned; her neck and breasts have an established reputation for beauty and colour; her feet small and pretty.' One must, in fairness, recall this also as often as one

recalls Swift's description of 'Rivella' as 'very homely and very fat.' Her 'Power of Love, in Seven Novels,' may be regarded as an attempt at fictitious narrative divorced from satire: it cannot be regarded as in any way redeeming her reputation, for Mrs. Manley's ideal of love is essentially coarse and sensual. Yet with all her imperfections on her head, Mrs. Manley may not be lightly passed by in a review of what women have done to develop the novel. She emphasised the interest attaching to fictitious narrative based on veritable experience, and she showed how deadly is satire lurking in fiction like a snake in the grass.

Another conspicuous figure among the women writers of these early days is Eliza Haywood, who has been exposed to the ridicule of all time by being offered in the 'Dunciad' as the less disgraceful prize in a certain Rabelaisian contest.

See in the circle next Eliza plac'd,
Two babes of love close clinging to her waist;
Fair as before her works she stands confessed,
In flowers and pearls by bounteous Kirkall dressed.

She has been called 'perhaps the most voluminous female writer this kingdom ever produced,' but it cannot be said that she used her pen to any good purpose. One need not accept in its entirety the accusation that she is one of 'those shameless scribblers who, in libellous memoirs and novels, reveal the faults or misfortunes of both sexes, to the ruin of public fame or disturbance of private happiness,' but it must be confessed that she claims the contemporary privilege of calling a spade a spade. Withal, Mrs. Haywood's 'Betsy Thoughtless' (1751) is a book that throws valuable light on the manners of its age. Like Madame D'Arblay's 'Evelina,' parts of which it has been supposed to have suggested, 'Betsy Thoughtless' is rich in illustration of life in the eighteenth century, and from the standpoint of the closing years of the nineteenth century one views with amazement the conduct of the men and women of a hundred years ago. Pope declared that

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien
As to be hated needs but to be seen,

and cynics would fain assert that we of this generation have simply disguised the monster, who is as lusty as he was in Mrs. Haywood's time; but even cynics will not assert that women are now subject to the contemptuous treatment of those shameless days. Directly and indirectly the literature of the last century

treats woman as an inferior creature made for man's pleasure. When Milton makes Eve say to Adam—

O thou for whom

And from whom I was form'd, flesh of thy flesh,

And without whom am to no end,

he enunciates a doctrine that long governed and perverted the sexual relation. Addison habitually treats woman as a somewhat troublesome domestic pet, while the realistic novels of the last century represent her as the temporary object of insulting pursuit. There is an unconscious admission of this purely physical estimate of women in a sentence in Miss Fielding's 'David Simple': '[David Simple's] mother was a downright country-woman, who originally got her living by plain work; but, being handsome, was liked by Mr. Simple'; and it is noteworthy that the earliest women novelists did very little to maintain the honour of their sex. Not till we come to the novels of Charlotte Smith (died 1806) do we find a deliberate attempt to represent woman as demanding attention by intellectual and moral qualities.

'Betsy Thoughtless' was written towards the close of Mrs. Haywood's life, and before it appeared the reading public was in possession of Richardson's 'Pamela' and 'Clarissa Harlowe,' of Fielding's 'Joseph Andrews' and 'Tom Jones,' and of Smollett's 'Roderick Random'; that is to say, it was not published till the modern novel was fully developed. Her early novels have little merit, and are inferior in importance to Miss Fielding's 'David Simple,' which was issued in 1744, and, on historical grounds, must be regarded as an important book in the history of the novel. Richardson said of it: 'What a knowledge of the human heart! Well might a critical judge of writing say, as he did to me, that your late brother's knowledge of it was not (fine writer as he was) comparable to yours. His was but as the knowledge of the outside of a clockwork machine, while yours was that of all the finer springs and movements of the inside.' This is a judgment considerably overstrained; but, as a matter of fact, 'David Simple' shows notable power of mental analysis, and an effective command of satire. Read, for example, this of a girl that has sacrificed liking to vanity: 'For now, that she thought him irretrievable, she fancied in him she had lost everything valuable; and though that very day all her grief had been how to get rid of him, yet, now he was gone, she would have sacrificed (for the present) even her darling vanity if she could have brought him

back again'; and this of a man, old and ugly, who wished to marry: 'He was not afraid of being refused, for he had money enough to have bought a woman of much higher rank.' And there is a strong note in the words, 'David Simple was convinced that no circumstances of time, place, or station made a man either good or bad, but the disposition of his own mind.' Unfortunately, the book is a total failure in point of construction. The author had the ability to produce a book strong in characterisation, but the influence of the picaresque school of romance, the school of Gil Blas, led her to introduce a series of incidents which fail to interest the reader.

Satire found another employment in the hands of Mrs. Charlotte Lennox, who in 'The Female Quixote' (1752) turned it with strong effect against the extravagance of the Scuderi romance. A special interest attaches to this book from the fact that the great Cham of literature himself is supposed to have written the last chapter, where the heroine is reclaimed from the dominion of absurdity. Mrs. Lennox was indeed a high favourite with Dr. Johnson, who has recorded that he 'dined at Mrs. Garrick's with Mrs. Carter, Miss Hannah More, and Miss Fanny Burney: three such women are not to be found. I know not where I could find a fourth, except Mrs. Lennox, who is superior to them all.' This is praise from Sir Hubert Stanley, but the recipient seems to have deserved the esteem in which she was held by her contemporaries. She was an industrious and in some directions a meritorious writer, whose work enlisted the sympathy of others besides Johnson. Goldsmith wrote an epilogue for her comedy 'The Sister,' and the Earl of Orrery contributed to her version of Brunnoy's 'Greek Theatre.' An interesting incident in her life is the banquet given by the Ivy Club in honour of the publication of her 'Memoirs of Harriet Stuart.' She and her husband were present at the feast, which lasted all night, and included among its attractions a large apple-pie presented by Dr. Johnson!

Posterity, however, has practically ceased to remember Mrs. Lennox, while it remembers with some distinctness one of the ladies whom Dr. Johnson ranks as her inferiors. Miss Burney, or Madame D'Arblay, retains a place in literature partly by her novels, partly by her exceedingly interesting diary. Nor must it be forgotten that, although 'Evelina' appeared so long ago as 1778, there are many people still living who were young men and women when she died. She has been praised by Macaulay for

describing real life 'with broad comic humour,' yet in language that is never 'inconsistent with rigid morality or even with virgin delicacy,' and it is true that '*Evelina*' possesses unique interest as a description of contemporary manners and is free from unnecessary coarseness; it is also true that the author has a keen eye for the ridiculous and a considerable gift of satire. Nevertheless Madame D'Arblay is not entitled to any high place as a novelist; her constructive skill is small, and her characters are for the most part what Jonson would have called 'humourists,' that is, they are the incarnation of qualities rather than flesh and blood individuals. Moreover, the author herself is a 'humourist,' her ruling passion is a morbid craving to be 'genteel'; she has no mercy for vulgarity or the vulgar, but she fails to see that her own worship of society conventions is itself vulgar. And hence one may doubt the propriety of assigning to her 'broad comic humour'; she was too much of a prig to be possessed of humour, which implicates geniality. Still Madame D'Arblay claims respect on the specific ground that she did much to purify an important form of literature, while she has a certain additional claim to remembrance from her connection with Dr. Johnson. Did not Dr. Johnson kiss her, and has she not recorded, 'To be sure I was a little surprised, having no idea of such facetiousness from him'?

A more likable personality than the demure Miss Burney is Mrs. Charlotte Smith, a woman on whom had descended many graces of body and of mind, but whom Fate refused any measure of happiness. Married at the age of fourteen to a man of mean and contemptible character, she found herself condemned to an existence of gloom and drudgery. After her father-in-law died, her husband quickly squandered a large inheritance, and found himself in a debtors' prison, where his wife attended him. From this time onwards Mrs. Smith's lot was to struggle to support herself and her family by hard and unremitting literary labour. Very little has lived of her many and varied productions, and yet she does not deserve to have been so completely forgotten. Mention has already been made of her honourable attempt to raise the estimation of her sex by declining to make the interest of her heroines depend on purely physical attractions, and some credit is also due to her for having been one of the very first writers to employ description to heighten the power of the novel. She seems to have been peculiarly susceptible to the influences of nature, and her writings contain many descriptive passages. The best of

her novels is 'The Old Manor House' (1793), which may still be read with pleasure; in it her somewhat moderate powers of construction and of character-drawing appear to most advantage, and have produced a really interesting story. She also wrote verses, whose prevailing tone is a gentle melancholy; in lines like these one hears a sigh for the careless joy of her childish years:

Ah, poor humanity! so frail, so fair,
Are the fond visions of thy early day,
Till tyrant passion and corrosive care
Bid all thy fairy colours fade away.
Another May new buds and flowers will bring,
Ah! why has happiness no second spring?

Like the present generation, eighteenth century readers were allured to the consideration of grave questions by means of the problem novel, for the era of the French Revolution was a time when the air was full of problems and when quite a vigorous crop of purpose novels sprang up. Among the writers affected by the demand for a return to pure, unsophisticated nature was the beautiful and daring Mrs. Inchbald. At an early age she was seized with a strong passion for the stage, and twice, while still in her teens, she ran away from home and went to London to see whether Fortune would do for her what application to stage-managers had failed to do. A sufficiently dangerous step this on the part of a young woman who is described as 'tall and slender, with hair of a golden auburn, and lovely hazel eyes, perfect features, and an enchanting countenance.' In her nineteenth year she married, her husband being an actor, and she herself now appeared on the boards. She does not seem to have been a very successful actress, but she was able to make considerable sums by her pen: she was exceedingly well paid for her plays, and very well paid for her two novels, 'A Simple Story,' and 'Nature and Art.' In spite of grave defects, for which the imperfect education of the author is so far responsible, these two stories are eminently readable. As has been said by critics, 'A Simple Story' is really two stories, and the double plot is handled with some awkwardness; moreover, there is a tendency to exaggeration in the portraiture, a notable example being the character of Sandford, the priest, whose churlishness is overdrawn to the point of childishness, while much of the writing is very raw. Still, the story holds the reader's attention; the chief figure, Miss Milner, is skilfully handled, and the incidents are well chosen and effectively used.

The lesson of the story, for it has a moral writ large on it, is that parents are bound to give the most serious consideration to the training of their children. In 'Nature and Art' the moral is of another kind. In it we are invited to despise William, the polished, insincere product of civilisation, and to admire his cousin Henry, the natural man, who cannot understand the hollow refinements of an artificial society. The reader has no difficulty in despising William, but it is not so easy to admire Henry, for in her anxiety to do justice to his transparent honesty, Mrs. Inchbald makes the worthy youth ridiculous. But withal 'Nature and Art' is an impressive story, and the author's dramatic experience stands her in good stead in the powerful scene where William, now risen to the bench, passes sentence of death on the wretched woman in the dock, whom he fails to recognise as the hapless victim of his own selfish passion. The conclusion of the book is notable: "While I have health and strength," cried the old man, and his son's looks acquiesced in all the father said, "I will not take from any one in affluence what only belongs to the widow, the fatherless, and the infirm; for to such alone by Christian laws—however custom may subvert them—the overplus of the rich is due." Mrs. Inchbald was left a widow when she was only in her twenty-sixth year, and though she was besieged with addresses, honourable and dishonourable, she repulsed them all, and bore herself with prudent wisdom among the distinguished people that gathered round the popular writer. At the same time she seems to have indulged a natural vanity over her good looks, her many conquests, and her noble acquaintances. Her letters tell us that she never gave up the domestic industry that early circumstances had made first necessary and then habitual. 'Last Thursday morning,' she writes, 'I finished scouring my bed-chamber, while a coach with a coronet and two footmen waited at the door to take me an airing.'

The time was now come when romanticism, which had had to give way before the tide of realism, was again to assert itself with power. In 1764 Horace Walpole had published his Gothic romance, 'The Castle of Otranto,' a book that introduced novel readers to a world very different from that in which they had been wandering under the guidance of the great novelists of the eighteenth century, and by-and-by this new kind of fiction was taken up with much success by two women, Clara Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe. The modern reader is prone to grin broadly at

Walpole's elaborate machinery for making the flesh creep, and one may doubt whether there were ever readers that were disturbed by a passage like this: "Thou art no lawful prince," said Jerome; "thou art no prince—go, discuss thy claim with Frederic; and when that is done—" "It is done," replied Manfred; "Frederic accepts Matilda's hand, and is content to waive his claim, unless I have no male issue." As he spoke these words, three drops of blood fell from the nose of Alfonso's statue.

The most credulous devourer of romances must have drawn the line at a statue whose nose bled: it is a circumstance almost as ridiculous as the catastrophe in Lewis's 'Monk.' In that hysterical romance the demon's flight with the priest is intended to be appalling, but is in fact one of the most laughable things in our literature. However, with all its absurdities, the School of Terror was established, and held its ground till the day of Scott, whose early verse is strongly marked by some of its characteristics. But Walpole's successors and imitators felt he had made too severe a demand on the imagination of readers, and in her preface to 'The Old English Baron,' Clara Reeve points out some defects in 'The Castle of Otranto.' 'The machinery is so violent that it destroys the effect it is intended to excite. Had the story been kept within the utmost *verge* of probability, the effect had been preserved, without losing the least circumstance that excites or detains attention.' Miss Reeve's idea was to cut down the supernatural to an irreducible minimum, which 'the gentle reader' might fairly be asked to put up with. But 'The Old English Baron' (1777) is not a success in spite of the fact that we are not called upon to stand anything extra mundane beyond what might be inventoried as certain hollow groans, one suit of armour, clanking, and one phantom knight.

The book is much less impressive than the more famous 'Mysteries of Udolpho' (1794), by Mrs. Radcliffe, who must be allowed to have achieved excellence in the field of art she chose to cultivate, and this both Miss Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe's imitators failed to do. Every mind is affected—the average mind is very strongly affected—by gloom and expectancy, and of this feeling Mrs. Radcliffe takes skilful advantage. Even ordinary characters, natural incidents and natural scenery, loom large and portentous in the romantic obscurity through which we follow the mysterious windings of the narrative; again and again we seem to strain eye and ear to follow the progress of events, and await

the approach of some dread catastrophe. And, it is important to observe, Mrs. Radcliffe effects all this after parting completely with the supernatural; she is so careful, indeed, to show that terrified suspense may be induced by perfectly natural circumstances that she mars her art and goes far to offend the reader by irritatingly simple explanations of fear-inspiring phenomena. Nevertheless, Mrs. Radcliffe occupies one of the highest positions in the School of Terror, and she has earned her place by genuine merits of composition.

An altogether different interest attaches to the novels of the Sisters Lee, joint authors of a collection of stories called the 'Canterbury Tales.' Of these stories all save two were written by Harriet Lee, and to her, as the author of 'Kruitzner,' belongs the credit of having inspired Byron's 'Werner.' The two sisters deserve to be remembered for the brave way in which they faced the world. Their father had taken to the stage, where he commanded little success, and from him they inherited neither repute nor money: it was to the stage, however, that his daughters were indebted for a secure and honourable provision; the success of Sophia's comedy, 'The Chapter of Accidents,' enabled the sisters to set up a school at Bath, and in it they won a competence and general respect. The younger sister, Harriet, was the more voluminous writer: her dramatic work is of no value, but several of her tales are marked by strong interest, and must be regarded as an important contribution to the stream of fiction. Her sister demands special mention as the author of 'The Recess' (1784), one of the very earliest and, it must be added, very worst of our historical novels.

With the Sisters Lee we enter the nineteenth century, and they may be allowed to end the list of early female novelists. The last of the 'Canterbury Tales' appeared in 1805; nine years later a delighted public was reading 'Waverley.' We have therefore reached the period when the English novel entered on its most flourishing days, and now leave it, content to have indicated in some measure what women did to illustrate and develop the capabilities of fiction.

AN ARBITRARY LOVER.

SETH WAVING walked back into the village one evening as though he had only the day before quitted it.

It was two-and-twenty years since he had last looked down the village street—two-and-twenty years since he had turned and said ‘Good-bye’ softly to the familiar scene before departing with the policeman who had come to fetch him. Twenty-two years, and he had never looked on it since. He halted on the gentle rise at the top of the street, and gazed around him and in front; he was not given overmuch to sentiment, but his eyes softened as he gazed.

It was not much changed. There was a gap in the irregular row of brown thatched cottages, where a fire had consumed one of the oldest; and its very foundations were now lost under the straight rows of cabbage plants in the garden which had taken its place. The fir tree, too, was gone that had given a name to the three cottages sheltered under one roof at the further end of the road, just where it branched off to the squire’s park and the church. The village green was enclosed by a stout fence, and cows were grazing on it in the evening sunshine; the lord of the manor had grabbed it, and the children were playing in the dusty road instead of on the short sward that had belonged to the children of Seth Waving’s childhood.

But nothing else seemed changed.

He called to a small boy of about seven summers, who was making a dust pie in the road.

‘Come yer, my son, wilt?’

The child came, obedient, and stared at the stranger, with his thumb in his mouth, and his eyes uplifted. Seth Waving had known eyes like those, many years ago—grey, with dark iris, and long black lashes fringing them.

‘Bist frowtened?’ he asked the child, gently. ‘Yent no need, fur I wunt hurt ‘ee. Who lives in thic thur house, now, down agen th’old tree stump?’

The child took his thumb from his mouth, and melted slowly into a prolonged howl. A girl, some few years his senior, looked over the hedge at him, and cried—

'Speak up to the gentleman, Seth Bradley! What is it you'd please to want, sir?'

'Be his name Seth Bradley?'

'Yes, sir.'

'An' what be yourn?'

'Jane Bradley, sir,' with a deep curtsy.

'An' your mother's?'

'Her be Widow Bradley. Father's dead.'

'How long hev' he bin dead?'

The girl looked at her small brother meditatively.

'He be seven,' she said, 'an' he were barn'd the day father died.'

The stranger looked closely at the little maid before asking his next question.

'Thy mother's name be Sarann, bent-a?'

'Yes, sir.'

'I thought I weren't makin' no mistake. Little maid, wheer do thy mother live?'

The little maid pointed to the brown roof which embraced three dwellings under its motherly wings of thatch, and Seth Waving strode down the street, and knocked at the furthest door of the three. A woman opened to him, and he said—

'Good evenin', Sarann.'

She gazed at him in a puzzled way for nearly a minute; then after bewilderment came uncertainty, and after uncertainty conviction.

'Good evenin', Seth,' she said quietly. 'You be come back, then?'

'I be, Sarann.'

'Fur good?'

'Fur good or fur bad—one or t'other on 'em.'

'Thy feyther be dead this nine year.'

'I knows it; an' Jenny be dead too, an' her husband married agen. I've a-heerd the main o' the news out in Australia. You was married too, Sarann, e'en-a'mwoast a year arter I'd a-gone.'

Mrs. Bradley's grey eyes came in search of his own, and then dropped to the ring on the fourth finger of her thin left hand.

'I were,' she said, calmly, and with resignation.

'Was you happy?'

'I had a comfor'able home, an' a comfor'able husband; I waited a bit for you, an' I couldn't wait no longer to be a burden

on mother. I thought you'd come home after you'd a-done the fourteen days, but you didn't ; I never was one to chackle, but my heart were pretty nigh broke, Seth.'

'How could I come whoam when I'd a-ben took up for poachin', an' ahl the country knawed it ? Who'd ha' gin ma reg'lar work agen, arter that ?' he asked bitterly. 'Farmers 'ould ha' employed ma when 'em couldn't get no other, an', when 'em could, I'd ha' starved. I went abroad wi' Tom Simmons, an' him an' me've lived together up in the Bush ever sence. I didn't make my fortun', but I've a-got what'll bring ma in a suv'ren a week as long as I lives, an' summun else arter ma, whosomdever I med leave un to.'

Mrs. Bradley sighed. 'My husband died seven year ago last Michaelmas,' she said. 'My eldest darter be twenty year old, anighthst : I've got five, an' the youngest were barn'd the day his feyther died.'

'I've a-sid he,' remarked the visitor ; 'he be called Seth, too.'

A faint colour showed itself in Mrs. Bradley's pale cheeks, and made her look half a dozen years younger.

'I named un fur you,' she said simply. 'I thought 'twere no harm when my husband were dead ; an' we *was* friends, Seth.'

'Yes, we was friends, Sarann,' he answered, looking at her more closely.

She was tall and thin, and her hair was brushed back straight from her low forehead in an unbecoming and uncompromising manner. There were a few lines of care on her brow, and her cheeks were sunken, as though she habitually went short of food ; there was a look almost of gauntness in her lean form. But her eyes were grey, and large, and heavily fringed ; her nose was straight, and her pale lips had lost none of their curves. In her clear skin mantled a delicate colour still.

'You baint much changed, though you be older,' remarked Waving meditatively. 'An' you be thin, too, as if you didn't get awver much to eat, however. Times has bin hard, I reckon.'

'I ain't never gone to the parish. I gets work two or three days a week, an' Nellie arns good wages an' helps me all she can.'

'An' your boys ?'

'Fred baint very stiddy ; he be young yet, an' he'll come all right, plaise God, but he don't bring home more'n enough to kip un. Dick on'y gets boy's wage, an' you knows what that be.'

'So you goes short, Sarann ?'

'I be used to 't,' said Mrs. Bradley without emotion.

Waving shook his head, and then looked again at her.

'I've got a pound a week,' he said presently.

'Ah!'

'Tis more'n I wants, so to spake.'

'Mebbe so, Seth,' said Mrs. Bradley, to whom it was a large fortune.

'We was friends wunst, Sarann.'

'Ah-h,' again, with the soft, long-drawn vocal which indicates ungrudging assent in Oakshire.

'We kep' comp'ny wunst.'

'We did, Seth.'

'Shall us kip comp'ny again?'

Mrs. Bradley gave a scared look at him, and threw her apron over her face with a quick movement.

'My money 'ould do fur both on us, an' your two little uns; an' t'others could hae a home wi' us. We med so well make a a match on't—wi' your consent, Sarann.'

The apron was withdrawn by Sarann's trembling hand, and her face, flushed pinkly, looked out again at her visitor.

'We be too old now,' she murmured. 'Folks 'ould laugh at us.'

'Dall 'em; what'd that matter to we?'

'I ain't expected it; I didn't know you was comin' home. I didn't hardly know as you was still alive.'

'But you gave a thought to ma sometimes, didn't 'ee, Sarann?'

'Yes, I gave 'ee a thought sometimes,' she admitted.

'An' we *was* friends wunst?'

'Ah-h.'

'Have you aught to say agen ma?'

'No, Seth.'

'Do 'ee cling still, as the sayin' is, to Ben Bradley?'

'Not to call it *cling*, Seth.'

'Hev' you took to arranother man sence his death?'

'No.'

'Then I reckons we'll make a match on't as soon as you likes. I ain't never forgot you out there, Sarann.'

The pale woman, still a little flushed, got up and raked together the dying embers in the fireplace, as though she were striving to put fresh life into the long dead ashes of her marital love. She was too conventional, like most of her class, to depart from recognised methods of courtship; she had not seen Seth Waving for

more than a score of years, and in spite of the sentimental memory which, although it was long buried out of sight, had never waned in all the years of his absence she could not bring herself to depart suddenly from the traditions of her lifetime.

'I'd like to marry you, Seth,' she said weakly, 'if so be you're willin', as you says—but I don't know—'

'What doesn't know?'

'How folks 'ould take it.'

'Dall folks, one an' all; 'tis fur you an' me to manage this yer job.'

'Mebbe the childern 'ouldn't like it.'

'Tis fur you an' fur me; an' if 'tis best fur we 'tis best fur the childern.'

'An' the neighbours med think 'twas too suddent.'

'What! arter two an' twenty year?'

A tear started to the pale woman's eye, and she wiped it with the corner of her apron, but said nothing. Her under lip was trembling, and she could not trust herself to speak.

'Well, Sarann?'

Again no answer; and Waving left his chair and took from her the tongs with which she was still coaxing the cinders together, and laid them down on the bricks which served as a fender.

'Set down,' he said, 'an' gie me my answer. Will you marry ma as soon as parson can call us?'

'You was allus so arbitery, Seth,' murmured Mrs. Bradley feebly.

'An' I reckons 'tis summun as is arbitery as you needs to kape the life in your body, wi' ahl they childern a-eatin' you up. You trust to me; I be rough, an' I ain't got much religion, mebbe, livin' in the Bush ahl these years; but I've lived straight, so help me God, an' I ain't got no bad ways. Now, my dear, 'tis yes or no—one or t'other on't.'

'Then 'tis no,' cried Mrs. Bradley in desperation; 'leastways, not now—leastways, 'tis no. I be kindly obliged to 'ee, Seth, but I can't do 't. Mebbe there's others as is younger as you'll come to fancy, if you wants a wife.'

'Mebbe there be,' replied Seth calmly.

Waving took a cottage in the village, and settled down within a stone's throw of his old sweetheart. When he hired a waggon and went to Oldborough for the furniture he found it necessary

to buy, he let the things stand on the bit of green outside his door for some hours before taking them in to their places. They were good things, and solid of their kind, and he thought perhaps Sarann might notice them. Sarann did notice them, and gauged their value to a shilling; and praised them to the woman next door in a distant and uninterested kind of way. Then she went into her own house and wiped off a tear with her apron; and said to the ashes while she raked them together:

‘My furniture ‘ould ha’ held good for another twenty year; an’ my bedstead be a better un than his’n.’

It seemed to her a waste to spend so much good money on things that were not really needed.

But her daughter Nellie had much to say about the new furniture.

She came in, in her bright, fresh beauty—a young and lovely likeness of her mother. Her hair was not dull, and faded, and thin, but golden and plentiful, and it waved in little rough curls over her temples, as her mother’s, perhaps, had done many years before. Her eyes were soft and blue, and her skin was of cream and of roses; and her hands were small and smooth, and not toil-reddened as her mother’s were. For, indeed, Nellie took good care that her hands should not be roughened through too much hard work; and she had left her one situation partly on this account, and had never sought another. Straight and lissom as a well-grown young sapling, she carried herself with an ease and grace not often seen in the village, and her neighbours were not slow to prophesy that she would come to no good, as is the way of neighbours.

‘Have you seen Mr. Waving’s furniture, mother?’ she asked, as she came in and hung her gaily flowered hat on a peg behind the kitchen door.

‘Ah, my dear.’

‘Isn’t it lovely?’

‘Yes, my dear.’

‘That’s the very chest of drawers Ernest looked at last market-day,’ continued Nellie with a sigh. ‘He’d ha’ bought it if he’d had another half-crown in his pocket; an’ now ‘tis gone.’

‘There be plenty more as good at Oldborough.’

Nellie sighed again. She was not as yet entitled to inquire too curiously into the details of Ernest’s expenditure; but she had reason to believe that, being baulked of the chest of his desire for

want of an extra half-crown, he had spent the money he had saved on a new suit of clothes. The carrier had reported on his last round that he was bringing a parcel from Snip's for Ernest, and Nellie could only wait anxiously for Sunday to confirm her fears, a visit to his mother having brought forth no result whatever.

'Mrs. Stone says Mr. Waving courted you, mother, before you married father,' said Nellie, with an effort rousing herself from her despondency with regard to the coveted chest of drawers.

'Did she, my dear ?'

Nellie looked closely at her mother. Could it be that she was blushing, or was it the reflection of the fire on her thin cheeks ?

'It must be the fire—at her age, too !' she said to herself, ' it would be ridiculous.'

' Didn't you love him, mother ? '

' I liked him well enough, my dear.'

' Then why didn't you marry him ?'

' Because I married your father.'

'Mrs. Stone says Mr. Waving was sent to prison for poaching.'

'He was, Nellie.'

'But she says no one will think anything of that now ; he's come back quite rich, she says, and no need to work, if he don't choose, so long as he lives. Don't you think him handsome, mother ?'

' Looks is deceivin' sometimes ; handsome is as handsome does,' replied Mrs. Bradley, with one of the platitudes in which it was her wont to seek refuge.

' I ain't talking of *doing*—I'm talking of looks. Don't you think he's handsome for his age ? Of course he's old, and his hair's getting grey, but there's something about him that's—that's distin'gy,' concluded Nellie, with a reminiscence of her novel-reading vocabulary usually reserved for girl-friends in the village.

' Mebbe so, my dear,' responded the mother as she went about her occupation.

Although Waving had, as they said, no need to work for a living, he did not settle down to a life of idleness. When he had furnished the house and planted his garden, he got employment as a woodman on the squire's estate, and worked as hard as the best of them. He was received by the society of the village with a subdued friendliness which intimated that so long as he continued to behave himself circumspectly he should be welcome in the little community. At the same time the feeling was fairly general that

having crossed the sea and lived in foreign parts he must have acquired a certain hidden store of wickedness—wickedness which might at any moment exhibit itself, and give the signal for his downfall in the eyes of the village world. But as time went on, and no scandal attached itself to him in any way ; as he worked as hard as his fellows, paid his bills regularly, drank no more beer than sufficed him for his evening meal, and generally conducted himself in most conventional style, he was gradually accepted by his peers as a person of whom no one could say a hard word, and therefore worthy of all estimation so far as present developments might admit. It was even suggested that he was entitled to choose a wife from the village ; and, indeed, before the summer was ended, it was obvious to the meanest rustic capacity that he had already made his election, and that pretty Nellie Bradley would be the proud sharer of his weekly income.

For Waving spent many an hour at the Fir-tree Cottage in pretty Nellie's company. It was judged that his first visits were paid to her mother, for the sake of old times ; his later ones to the daughter for the sake of her bright, fair face, and gay, winning ways. She was like Sarann before Sarann had grown thin, and pale, and careworn ; perhaps, after a while, he forgot the likeness, because so little of it was now remaining, and thought only how pretty was the daughter, and how bright, and how winning. Presently he suggested an occasional walk after Sunday evening service—the preliminary attention of a Wessex courtship—and Nellie, who was fascinated by her new admirer's strength and bigness, and handsome, toil-lined face, was proud to accompany him, and to submit to the teasing of the other village girls on the subject of her new 'young man.'

She was quite prepared to accept Waving as a very eligible husband when he should propose to fill the situation. Apart from her suddenly awakened admiration for him, though hardly less of a factor in her regard, was the undoubted circumstance of his immense wealth, which would give his wife a position superior to all others in the village after the innkeeper's lady. Such a position was not to be lightly disregarded, and certainly Nellie never dreamed of disregarding it.

Perhaps at first a qualm or two visited her heart when she thought of Ernest Stone's forlorn state, but she was easily able to excuse her desertion of him. In the first place, she could console herself with the knowledge that he had never definitely offered to

keep company with her, though he had walked with her for many months. Moreover, he had bought no more furniture since he missed the chance of the luckless chest of drawers, and his Sunday attire of late conclusively proved the direction his savings were now habitually taking. Of course she liked him, but she could not think of marrying a man who was content to live on indefinitely in his mother's cottage without making more effort than did Ernest for a separate establishment and a well-furnished home. So Nellie walked out on Sunday evenings with Seth Waving, and Sarann went home after church, and sat over her dying embers, and longed for a week-day task of mending or darning, that she might devote her thoughts to it without distraction.

Nellie liked to talk to her mother about her new admirer, and never wearied in her questions concerning his younger days. Mrs. Bradley listened, and responded, and sympathised, and prayed for her child's happiness. Her religion was not, perhaps, a very real thing to her, but she believed in the power of a great unknown Being to confer benefits, and she asked them assiduously for her pretty Nellie. If Nellie liked Seth, and if—if Seth liked Nellie, what was there to hinder their marriage? He was a kind man, if somewhat arbitrary; perhaps a softer and more yielding wife might have suited him better than her daughter, but he would make allowance for Nellie's imperious disposition, and give in sometimes to her wishes, even if they clashed with his own. Mrs. Bradley knew very well that Nellie must have her own way if the house was to be a peaceful one, and doubtless Seth would find this out too. But still—but still—if Ernest had been more persistent in his wooing, no other man would have had a chance in comparison with him.

So the time went on, and winter came—a winter hard and cruel, and dark with cold and snow. And little Seth Bradley sickened with the measles, and when the measles had left him a strange chill and shivering remained with him, and he began slowly to waste away before his anxious mother's eyes. To get him food and comforts she worked almost every day at the inn, charring, washing, baking—anything that would bring her in a shilling for little Seth. She stitched her fingers to the bone by the light of a flickering tallow candle each night, while she made warm garments with the flannel she bought for him; she spent her scanty dinner hour, snatched from the comfortable table at the inn, in cooking little meals which might tempt him to eat,

and in kneeling by his cot while he swallowed minute portions with difficulty and pain. She went out in the cold, cheerless mornings, long before sunrise, to pick sticks in the park to warm her boy's shivering limbs as he lay by the kitchen fire with the death-flush on his cheek, which all save herself could interpret aright. And she starved, and went cold, and wore herself out in her loving labour, as only a mother can.

During the many weeks of little Seth's illness Waving came often to the Fir-tree Cottage—even more often than had been his wont, though he stayed but a few moments when he came. He never took Nellie for a walk now, but he would come every night and ask her of the child's health, while the mother sat by with her swift needle, hardly listening to the low murmur of talk between the two. Waving would bring some trifling present for the child—a picture, an orange, a toy, anything for which he had expressed a wish, though, indeed, the tiny wasted hands could hardly hold the big man's gifts. Then he would go out as quietly as he had come in, with a low 'Good night' that included both mother and daughter, and could not disturb the drowsy sufferer in the cot.

So the days wore on, and with the rejoicings of Christmastide little Seth's pains were over, and his mother sat in her hard elbow-chair by the dull embers, and gave small heed to those of her children who yet remained to her. Nellie came, and knelt by her side, and whispered that Ernest had come back to her, and that she was happy again; Fred, in his rough, boyish way, brought all his weekly earnings, and poured them into her lap, and promised that no more should go in future to the public-house; and even little Dick and Jane tried many small expedients to 'hearten up mother.' She spoke gently to them all, but Seth, her baby, was gone, and nothing else seemed of consequence to the forlorn heart.

But as the weeks went on she roused herself again, and went about her daily round of work once more, only shunning her neighbours for fear they should speak to her of her trouble. Waving dared not come near her, for her sad, calm face discouraged him, as it did her other friends when they passed her at her garden gate, or on her way to her work at the inn. On Sunday evenings she would go to church in the old, thin, mourning garments that had served her for best since her husband's death, eight years before—garments that scarce could keep out

the cold winds of early spring, which pierced her through and through. Waving furtively touched the thin black shawl one Sunday evening as she passed him in the church porch, and then looked down at his own warm coat, comparing it with her scanty covering.

Nellie's radiant happiness demanded much sympathy from her mother. She came in one day after a visit to Mrs. Stone, and poured out her young heart to the ever-patient ears that listened so kindly to every word.

'Mother,' she cried, with a happy blush on the fair young cheek, 'Ernest has bought a chest of drawers, the very fellow to Mr. Waving's, and a polished walnut table, at the sale yesterday. There isn't any table like it this side of Oldborough, I'll warrant. And he has taken the cottage on Primrose Hill, and he thinks he'll have furniture enough by midsummer—'

'And then, Nellie—?'

'And then, mother, he wants to get married, and I've said Yes.'

'And do you love him, my dear? Do you love him better than arranother man as you've a-seen?'

Nellie looked scornful.

'Do you mean Mr. Waving?' she cried. 'That old fellow! Why, he's over forty, and getting grey too, and 'tis a funny sort of courting *he* does, with his solemn face, and his "How be your mother to-day?" Why, he never even offered to kiss me. I believe he only come here so often because you and him was old friends. Oh, I dare say he's all very well in his way, for them as likes old folks, but I've never cared for anyone but Ernest, though I did think he was serving me bad last summer.'

'And wasn't he, my dear?'

'No, mother, he wasn't. Those clothes were left him by his uncle as died, and Snip made them over to fit him. Ernest's been saving all this time, and he's got a pretty penny laid by, I can tell you; only he was shy, and when he thought I'd gone again him he wouldn't say nothing. So we was parted for a bit, but it's all right now.'

Mrs. Bradley put down her iron, and kissed the pretty face upturned to her.

'God bless you, Nellie!' she said, and her eyes filled with tears as she saw her daughter trip gaily down the court to rejoin her Ernest at the gate. 'God give my girl a good husband—as good

a husband as mine was, and more love in her heart for him than I had for her father. God forgive me !'

She tested the heat of her iron with a damp finger, and finding it cold set it down on the bricks by the fire, while she searched for the handkerchief in her pocket.

She leaned her head on her ironing-table, while hot, unwonted tears fell on the white linen she had so carefully ironed. A foot-step sounded on the threshold, and a large frame filled up the narrow doorway, while a pair of friendly eyes gazed at her where she sat.

'Sarann !' said a deep voice presently ; 'Sarann ! Can I come in, Sarann ?'

She got up in haste, and wiped her eyes furtively ; and Waving came in, shutting the door behind him with an air of mastership.

'I've summat to say to 'ee, Sarann.'

'Yes, Seth.'

'Do 'ee mind how long 'tis sence I come back from furrin parts ?'

'Tis a year to-day.'

'Ah, 'tis a year to-day. Folks 'ouldn't be scandalised now, would 'em ?'

'Scandalised, Seth ?'

'If you an' me was to make a match on't, my dear, I means. Now, look yer, Sarann ; laist time I put it to 'ee you said your say, an' I scorned to go contrairy to 'ee. But this yer time I be gwine to say mine. So don't 'ee cut in, I warns 'ee, 'cept 'tis to answer up to my questions.'

'You was allus arbitrary,' murmured Mrs. Bradley trembling, but not refusing to hear him.

'I takes it fur Gospel truth as you don't cling no more to Ben, as the sayin' is, an' hevn't a-took up wi' arranother man ?'

'No.'

'An' I reckons a widder's life ent ahl jy, wi' a pack o' childern to find vittles fur ?'

'No, Seth.'

'I reckons it bain't a life as arraone 'ould choose, willin', if a could hev arrathng better. Yen't that so ?'

'Yes.'

'An' you hevn't got nowt to say agen ma, hev 'ee, Sarann ?'

'No.'

'An' us *was* sweethearts wunst, wasn't us ? An you've a-give ma a thought or two sence you was left a widder, ain't you ?'

'Yes.'

'Yes to both on 'em?'

'Yes, Seth.'

'I thought I worn't makin' no mistake. There be times as a man should lead a 'ooman, an' there be times as a 'ooman should lead a man—though 'em bain't many. This yer be my turn. I seed parson a-gwine down the street half-an-hour agone, an' I told un to gie out the banns to-morrow, Sarann; so we'll be married Monday fortnit, my dear.'

A faint blush mantled in Mrs. Bradley's clear, pale cheek, and a faint smile curved her trembling lips.

'You was allus so arbitery, Seth,' she said weakly.

THE SALMON AND ITS KIN.

WITH all our practical and scientific means of investigation, it is strange how much remains to be known about the salmon. There are certain phases of its life-history which are as yet a mystery, and which the closest scrutiny has not enabled us to unravel. Its food, its migrations, its spawning, its very appearance vary in different rivers, though peculiar local conditions doubtless account for much of the confusion which now exists. There is one fact in connection with the species which is placed outside the range of controversy, and which ought to prove valuable in the future. It is now definitely known that in the great majority of cases salmon return to spawn in the river where they were bred. What it is that enables a fresh-run fish to do this is not clearly known, though Buckland in his life was strongly of the opinion that the chief sense employed was that of smell. This, however, is immaterial, though it is an important fact that the salmon returns to its old haunts.

This aristocrat of the waters is essentially a sea fish; and, at whatever season it may enter a river, the act is closely connected with the reproduction of its kind. Salmon begin to 'run' in English rivers from May to December, though the autumn months mark the time of the heaviest migrations. The ascent of the rivers is not rapid. Even if these be bank-full and the usual obstructions passable, the fish do not hurry, but love to examine the ground as they go.

There is a deafening roar from the water, and the impalpable spray constitutes a constant maze of translucent vapour. Ever and anon a big fish throws its silvery form many feet above the water, endeavouring to clear the obstacle. Many times it is beaten back, but at last gains a ledge, and by a concentrated effort manages to throw itself into the still, deep water beyond. Instead of leaping, the female fish try to run through the foam, and on from stone to stone, until a last leap takes them over. In the absence of salmon passes, many of the fish are picked from the rocks dead, and the majority of these prove to be males. This preponderance is also noticeable on the spawning beds, though why it should be so is not definitely known. The 'redds' are selected

where the river is clearest and purest, where there is bright gravel and an absence of sediment. As the she fish settles to spawning, she scoops out a hole in the sheltering gravel, and is closely attended by her mate. He indulges in many beautiful evolutions, and guards her against every enemy. When spawning is concluded, it is found that she has nearly a thousand eggs for every pound of her live weight. Take a handful of these pearly pink eggs, and examine them. Although delicate in appearance, they are not only capable of standing great pressure, but are so elastic that if one be thrown down it will rebound like an indiarubber ball. Once the eggs are hatched, the fry afford delicate morsels to a whole host of aquatic creatures—birds, insects, and fishes themselves. When the fry attain to the 'smelt' stage they have an equally hard time of it, and the number of their enemies is hardly to be reckoned.

Salmon are local in their haunts and habits, and on a favourite 'redd' numbers of fish are found. This hardly conduces to success, for when the beds are full of fish they are routed over and over until much spawn is spoiled; and it is when salmon are abundant and lie closely that the dreaded disease makes its appearance. This shows as a white fungus about the head and shoulders, and gradually spreads until the fish sickens and dies. Hardly anything is known about the disease, except that it is infectious. Newly run salmon that come in contact with affected fish soon develope it, and when once it breaks out there is scarcely an individual but what shows signs of the fungus. Spates and floods tend to eradicate it, and these alone.

An interesting fact anent salmon is that they produce hybrids with other fish. They breed freely with brown trout, brook trout, also those peculiar to Loch Leven; and this is the more remarkable as the offspring from this cross in no wise sacrifice their fertility. That salmon and trout are commonly found on the same 'redd' has long been known to poachers, though scientists have only admitted the fact recently. Here is an actual incident. Upon one occasion a poacher found a freshly run male salmon watching over a female, the former of which he gaffed. Knowing that a second suitor would soon take the place of the first, he allowed the she fish to remain. A second male attended her, a third, and a fourth, she starting down stream each time her lord was taken. Upon her fifth return she brought back a large yellow trout, and so much interest did the proceeding excite that for a

time the two were left unmolested. The spawn was then taken, hatched on a grill, and large healthy fry was the result.

Here the normal life-history of the salmon must be recurred to. After a brief period spent upon the spawning beds, the breeding fish return to salt water. At this time they are in a wretchedly poor condition—lean and lank, the flesh loose and ‘flabby.’ The spawned fish are known as ‘kelts.’ Once, however, in the food-abounding sea, they quickly recover condition, feeding now, for the most part, on shrimps. And here for a time we may leave them, whilst we return to the river. The eggs are hatched, the fry have absorbed their yolk sacs, and the tiny things are scattered over the higher river reaches. As the warm days develope the soft-winged *ephemeræ*, the fry begin to forage for themselves, and soon comes a crisis in their life-history. Some day a brown spate comes from the hills, the water is turgid, and in shoals the silvery samlets rush down to the sea to explore its wide world of waters. They usually travel with the first floods of April and May, and, having by this time assumed the migratory dress, are termed ‘smolts.’ At one time it was supposed that the young of salmon left their river nursery for the sea during the first spring, but this is not so. Some few early spawned fish may do this, but the majority wait until the following year. Once in the sea, smolts grow at a rapid rate, and, after from four to twelve months, return to the rivers where they were bred as ‘grilse.’ As the grilse make up stream they are pretty, silvery fish, and afford good sport. They vary greatly in weight, and it is somewhat curious that, upon their first arrival, they are invariably covered with ‘sealice.’ These uninvited guests are soon ridded in the rivers, as they do not long survive immersion in fresh water.

Entering rivers to spawn, going down to the sea, and re-entering the rivers, constitutes, shortly, the life-history of the salmon. Speaking generally, it feeds but little in fresh water, and loses weight; in the sea it feeds ravenously, and increases at a most remarkable rate. One British-killed salmon has attained to seventy pounds in weight and four and a half feet in length. This fish was taken in the Tay, and a cast of it is now in the Buckland Museum. Although this was a monster fish, almost without precedent, yet forty-pound salmon are not at all uncommon. In rivers the food of the salmon consists mainly of *ephemeræ* and their larvae, worms, and the spawn and fry of various fresh-water fishes. In the sea its food is more varied and abundant. Salmon

are invariably found in the proximity of shrimp grounds, and they devour enormous quantities of sand eels. That, however, upon which they most depend for sustenance is the myriad fry of the coarser sea fish. Of course, it is difficult to follow the fish in its migrations in salt water; but, from several sources, hints may be had of its wanderings. Salmon seem to swim in the sea in comparatively small droves, probably of from twenty to a hundred; and it is certain that they are much given to hugging the coast line. They stay long on banks or in channels, where favourite food is to be had, and are only driven off by receding tides. In spring and summer they do not inhabit deep water, but keep more to the banks, usually in only a few fathoms of water. At this time the sand-launce is much fed upon, as is the sea urchin in its earlier stages. Huxley asserts—and his assertion stands almost alone—that the salmon's food chiefly consists of a numerous class of small creatures (*entomostracous crustacea*) found in semi-solid masses upon the surface of deep water; in short, that the salmon swims in a species of animal soup, in which it has merely to open its mouth and swallow what enters it.

Every creature here named as constituting the food of salmon has been found in the fish itself, though, as these soft-bodied creatures are so quickly digested, positive identification is rendered most difficult. Both salmon and trout have the power (which, under certain circumstances, they exercise) of ejecting any food recently taken when they find themselves hooked or in the meshes of a net. Quantities of herrings have been found thus ejected. That the salmon is a voracious feeder in the sea is certain, and whilst in its native element it lays up a large store of fat—a fact which probably accounts for its feeding but little in rivers. Like many other sea creatures, it is able to draw upon this provision during its period of semi-fasting, as when on the spawning beds. The intestines of sea salmon are frequently almost buried in layers of fat, and another coating lies between the skin and the flesh. Salmon constantly confined in fresh water, as in lochs, and those which can take the sea at pleasure, are altogether different fishes. The flesh of the latter is firm and pink, that of the former white and insipid. As salmon grow rapidly, they probably do not attain to a great age.

After the salmon and trout proper come a number of close cousins, concerning which much confusion still exists. This, however, is not for want of attention to the subject by naturalists

The discrimination between species and varieties is often a difficult matter, and in this connection no rule which has been laid down has held good for any length of time. This is owing to the fact that fresh-water fishes adapt themselves to local circumstances more effectually and more rapidly than any other class of creatures. In fact, in the family under notice it is hardly known what are salmon and what are trout, and the only satisfactory division is that of migratory and non-migratory species. These include the salmon, brown brook trout, bull trout, salmon trout, gillaroo, semin, short-headed salmon, great lake trout, Loch Leven trout, a number of others, and some char. Many of these are nothing more than varieties with local peculiarities, probably produced by different conditions of food and water in their particular haunts. The inclination of naturalists has been to evolve species from mere varieties by a process of hair-splitting; but in the future, and as the laws which govern evolution become better understood, the tendency will probably be the other way.

The salmon or sea trout is, as its name implies, one of the migratory species. It is common in most salmon rivers, and is widely distributed throughout the country. In Ireland it is the white trout, in Cornwall and Devon the peal. Although not now so abundant as formerly, it is still taken in quantities in the salmon rivers of both our east and west coasts. Like its congeners, the salmon-trout enters rivers to spawn, leaving them again after depositing its eggs. As rivers are 'early' and 'late,' the fish ascend from the sea through summer and autumn, spawning from October to December. The kelts descend during the spring months at the same time as the smelts, after which the latter rapidly increase in size.

The sea trout is one of the favourite fishes of the angler. It is usually game for some weeks after trout are 'out,' and considerable interest attaches to its coming. The fisherman watches for signs of the sea fish in autumn as eagerly as he hoped for the advent of the swallow in spring. The presence of the former betokens long night fishings and abundant sport. He is not so wary as the trout, and a far more assiduous feeder. In September anglers who love autumn fishing move down to the deeps to meet the coming army. The fish enter the river in shoals, and every freshet enables them to gain a higher reach. As soon as they have had time to disperse, the angler takes the self-same stand from which only the frost drove him last year, and once more he

tries all his old flies. The sea trout are not slow to take his lures, and many a stout fight is made in the darkness. More often than not the fisher knows every hole of the pool, and, fight as it may, the game fish cannot shake him off. He mechanically leads the fish in the darkness, and can hardly discern it even as he takes it off the hook. At the coming of day, his creel is full of beautiful fish, every one of which has tried his skill but has eventually come to his basket. If the fish have run early, this fine sport sometimes lasts for a couple of months, and for the salmon or trout fisher it finishes the season.

It requires a practical fisherman to at once detect the sea trout. Speaking generally, it resembles its cousin the brown brook trout, except that one is done in bluish silver and the other in brown and gold. The water in which it happens to be for the time being has much influence upon its colour, and the silvery sea fish becomes more like the trout in proportion as it stays in fresh water. The white trout, which run in autumn, range from half-a-pound to three, four, and five pounds in weight, fish exceeding this being uncommon. The food of this species varies considerably, according to haunt and season. In the sea it is an omnivorous feeder, and is particularly fond of small crustaceæ, sand-hoppers, and other marine creatures. As it approaches the estuaries of rivers, its food becomes more general, and when it enters them the winged water-flies constitute almost its sole diet.

Another member of the salmonidæ is the bull trout, said to be a species by some, by others only a variety. It is found in many rivers common to salmon and sea trout, and is fairly abundant in most British salmon rivers. Its specific distinctions vary greatly with local conditions, so much so sometimes as almost to make it past recognition. 'Grey trout' is one of its provincial names, 'round tail' another, and on the north-east coast it is known as the 'scurf.' So much does the bull-trout resemble the true salmon in appearance that, after the tail has been clipped square, it is sold as such. This resemblance between the two species extends to haunt and habit, food, spawning, and migration. The bull trout attains to a considerable weight; and just as the fish is in good condition or otherwise, so its flesh is pink or yellowish white. As a game fish it affords capital sport, and fights as vigorously as the salmon or brown trout.

Of all fresh-water fishes the brown brook-trout is the one best loved by the angler. Salmon, trout, and grayling are the arist-

erats of the waters, and constitute the game fishes of Britain. The rivers and streams which they haunt lead us to the finest and wildest scenery, for only the pure sparkling waters are congenial to them. Every one loves running water, and there is a strange fascination about it difficult to define. Men direct their roads by the waterways, and for reasons far other than those of trade and commerce. Only the angler fully knows what these reasons are, and he it is who sees a hundred sights and hears a hundred sounds which are hidden from the traveller on the dusty highway. Flogging the trout streams in spring is surely the most fascinating pastime in which man may indulge, and truly blessed is he who has the opportunity. The trout-fisher cannot but be a minute philosopher—‘he must, he is, he cannot but be wise.’ This is how Shakespeare described his Antiquary; and has not the author of ‘I Go A-fishing’ taught us that there is much in common between the angler and the antiquary? How shall we look at the trout, how review his history; and how, further, forge some description of that ‘cold, sweet, silvery life, wrapped in round waves, and quickened with touches of transporting fear’?

Of late years it has been our duty to patiently watch and study the fish on their spawning beds; and if ever trout streams are more interesting than when the March-brown and the May-fly are ‘on,’ surely it is now. Look where we will, the fish are heading up stream to their spawning grounds. The salmon leaves the teeming seas, and the trout his river reaches, for the tributaries. At this time the fish glide through the deep water with as much eagerness as they rushed down the same river as silvery samlets or tiny trout. Maybe they will stay at some well-remembered pool; but the first frosts remind them that they must seek the shallower waters. A brown spate rolling down is another potent reminder, as they know that by its aid rocks and weirs will be more easily crossed. If their accustomed water-ways are of solid foam, they get up easily; but soft spray gives them little hold. We must surmount all obstacles, however, and hurry on to the bright brooks and pebbly shallows.

It is interesting to watch the fish settle down to their domestic duties; and now much of their ordinary watchfulness seems to leave them. Although this facilitates observation, it also assists the fish poacher in his nefarious task. When the female trout has scooped out a hole with her snout, she deposits the eggs at intervals in the sand. Whilst this is proceeding, with what care

and attention her lord attends her! See how he rises and falls, now passing over, now under, and settling first upon this side, then upon that. Observe, too, how he drives off the young and unfertile fish which are ever lying in wait to devour the spawn. When the 'milt' has been fertilised, the whole is covered over, there to remain till the eggs are hatched. The quantity of spawn deposited is such as to suggest that nothing which man could do would have any appreciable influence; and this is more readily understood when it is known that a trout deposits one thousand eggs, and a salmon upwards of nine hundred, for every pound of their live weight. In this connection, however, a vast number of enemies have to be taken into account. A single ill-timed spate will destroy millions of eggs by tearing them from the gravel, and a whole host of aquatic enemies have to be reckoned with; and this, it must be borne in mind, before the fish are hatched. The swan alone is able to destroy a gallon of spawn a day, and it is aided by other aquatic birds.

The process of hatching is long, but ultimately the eggs hatch into alevins. These at first lurk in any quiet retreat, though as soon as the yolk-sac is absorbed they begin to feed, and are termed 'fry.' Until this period they derive their nutriment from the yolk, and absorb only as much oxygen as will support life. The fry sink into the sheltering gravel, get under little rests, and only venture out as they see the tiniest bits of animal food floating down. If the embryo troutlets had enemies whilst still in the egg, they have more now. Fry afford delicate morsels to predatory water insects, to grebes, ducks, kingfishers, herons, and to every mature fish that haunts the stream. These have all to be reckoned with, and the fry have a hard time of it. By this time they have attained to an inch in length, and are daily better able to look after themselves. As they awake to their active summer life the troutlets find themselves far up the tributaries; and here they will remain until they descend to the main waters. This will be in from ten to sixteen months.

When they have dropped down to the great river they are chary of venturing far out into the world of waters, but for a time haunt the gravel beds, preferring those with little bays and eddies. The pebbly reaches afford them the greatest protection; and the more thickly grown are the banks with brambles and cresses the better. The first bring food; the second afford protection. Fry are usually found in about four inches of water, and the tendency

is for the fish to get into deeper conditions as they increase in age and size. They always exhibit sufficient instinct, however, to remain near those spots which enable them to get into quiet eddies, so as not to be swept away by the rushing waters. When the fish descend the streams they have attained to three or four inches in length, and are known as 'yearlings.' This is a generally descriptive term, though not always accurate. The troutlets have now attained to a stage when they can begin the battle of life, and although they have fewer they have larger enemies. Herons destroy quantities of yearlings; pike consume great numbers; and we have seen a pair of kingfishers feeding their newly-fledged young upon them. Otters do but little harm to trout at this stage, preferring, as they pass up the shallow streams, the abundant fresh-water crayfish.

At this stage of their growth troutlings are exceedingly interesting; and probably every angler has watched them in early summer, when myriads of black gnats revolve just over the water, gambolling in the most frolicsome fashion. At the end of two seasons the young trout have increased to six or eight inches, and at this stage the angler first becomes acquainted with them. Like smelt, they are exceedingly troublesome. The progression from troutlet to trout may be said to take place from the second spring to the end of summer. The fish, which has now attained to half a pound in weight, feeds on the various members of the *Ephemerae*, grows rapidly, and shakes off its enemies. And now, having followed the troutlet from egg to fuller life, we must go back for a moment to the fish that produced it. When trout are spawning but little food is taken, and that from the bottom. As the fish leave the 'redds,' they are lean and lank, more nearly resembling a pike than a trout. In an ordinary season, the fish are all off the redds by December.

It is not until March that trout leave their dark retreats and begin to feed on the surface flies that the first fine days find upon the stream. If the season is open, food is abundant, though the fish rise only for an hour or so in the middle of the day. Every month brings its own peculiar insect host, and the trout angler, observing these, dresses his flies accordingly. The different nature of rivers influences not only the supply of insect food but the fish. The trout of slow, southern streams grow quicker and heavier than those of the colder northern ones. Speaking generally, the small-winged flies are taken during the day, the larger-winged ones at

night. The trout, like other fish and some birds, does not swallow its insect food until a considerable pellet has been collected in the mouth. The weather influences the distribution of fish in a river, especially trout. And this remark applies to the different heights of the water. A good trout angler always knows just where to find his game, not only as to season, but as to wind and weather. In the cold of winter, so in summer, the fish are found in the deep dubs, and a favourite haunt in spring and summer is upon the 'draws' and rippling reaches. At flood time the fish are driven to the stream sides, worms and food being washed there; and then they have an aversion to be in rushing, turbulent, or muddy water. Of course, trout are found in tarns, ponds, lochs, as well as in rivers; but the latter they love and thrive in best. Every one knows what a handsome fish the pink-spotted trout is, and also that it greatly varies in colour. Trout have the power to take on themselves the colour of the stream which they haunt, and no fresh-water fish conforms more admirably to its environment. This is one of the most remarkable traits in the fish's economy. Other local conditions greatly affect the species. Those in lakes attain to a considerable size, and their predatory instincts are greatly developed. The fact of trout interbreeding with salmon has been already mentioned, as has also the fact of the fertility of the produce. Trout are subject to the same devastating disease as salmon, and of late years several of the best trout streams in the country have been almost depopulated by its agency.

KAIKAI.

KAIKAI was my first case, and I owe him a debt of gratitude that cannot be repaid by this paltry attempt to rescue his memory from immediate oblivion, for he imparted to the early months of my official career a liveliness that outweighed the discomfort of exile in an out-district. When we first met, a few days after my arrival on the scene of my labours, I was fresh from England, ignorant of the language and customs of the people I had been sent to manage; and the guardianship of Kaikai was a liberal education in itself. He laid the foundation of all the knowledge I ever acquired about his people, and the physical geography I learned while I was running after him lasted me my stay in the country. He was a great untameable soul, a Prometheus unbound, that would have left his mark upon the valley history if he had lived a generation earlier.

Kaikai was born of poor but disreputable parents: his father was the hereditary priest of the heathen temple of Singatoka. For generations his fathers had been the medium of intercourse between the people and their gods—between the living and the spirits of their dead ancestors. They used to sit at the door of the thatched temple, and receive the offering made to the god. In return they used to shiver and foam at the mouth, and declare the oracle in a squeaky falsetto. When thus possessed they pulled the wires of the tribal policy. The utterances of the gods by their mouths being in singular accordance with the interests of the aristocracy, the chiefs in their turn were pious and regular in the matter of offerings. Almost daily, pigs, with their hind legs broken to prevent them from straying, were turned loose in the sacred grove, and Kaikai's fathers waxed in substance. In the course of nature Kaikai would have succeeded to the sacred office, and this truthful history would never have been written, for of all human institutions the priesthood in Singatoka seemed the most necessary and the most permanent, and in none of the last old priest's inspired prophecies was there any hint that doom was about to fall upon his office. Yet so it was.

Before the old man died there had been the war, and the foreigner had come, allied with the men from the eastward, all

mad with blind and impious rage against the gods, and had burned the temple, and had taught the people—aye ! even the elders of them—to howl empty songs after the foreign fashion to the white man's god, and to do other foolishness with money and a basin. So when Kaikai grew to manhood, full of the craft and subtlety of his fathers, but with his fathers' occupation gone, he naturally fell to hen-stealing, and thus it was we met.

My first case called for no complicated sifting of evidence, for Kaikai pleaded guilty to having stolen two turkeys belonging to a storekeeper. He even admitted, when pressed upon the point, that he had been three times convicted for a similar offence—that he was, in fact, a hardened stealer of hens, as my native police-sergeant alleged. 'He was our heathen priest, sir, and that, perhaps, is why he is a hen-stealer !' Clearly, the prison had no terrors for Kaikai, and so, though I am no lover of the lash, I sentenced him as a 'rogue and vagabond' to an aggregate sentence of two months with a whipping of ten lashes. He was removed before he recovered from his surprise, and I could see the glint of the scissors as the police sheared his head to the scalp on the doorstep of the courthouse. After court he sent a message that he wanted to see me. I met him at the door of the police-quarters—a powerful, thick-set man, a shade darker than his fellows, with eyes set deep and far apart in his head, a broad forehead, and square, resolute jaw ; altogether he had a more intellectual head and face than any other Singatokan I had seen. He was perfectly respectful, but he spoke as a man who is conscious that the demand he is about to make is reasonable and well within his rights.

'I have heard, sir, that you ordered me to be beaten'—(the interpreter conducted the dialogue). 'It is my wish that you change your order. Imprisonment is nothing to me, but I cannot undergo a beating. How would it be if I laboured twice as long in prison instead of being beaten ?'

I pointed out that the sentence of the court once pronounced was as immutable as the courses of the stars, but he begged me to believe that the matter was capable of argument.

'I will endure a year—two years, even—working in the prison, but a beating I cannot endure ; and I fear, sir, that unless the sentence is altered I may run away, for beating is not good for me.'

The penalties of breaking gaol were sternly explained to him, and he was removed in custody.

There was no lock-up. The whole station had cost the Government only 30*l.*, and the money had all been sunk in grass huts, leaving nothing over for doors. The only building with a door within a radius of ten miles was my storehouse. That certainly had a door with a padlock; but to incarcerate Kaikai among my tinned meats and beer would be worse than shutting up a fox in a henroost. The prisoners of the provincial gaol hard by slept in the prison shed or not, as they liked, and worked out their punishment by catching fish for the ladies of the Roko's kitchen. For a prisoner resolved upon escape, such a place of confinement was obviously inadequate. To Suva gaol, five days distant by land or water, must Kaikai be sent for punishment, and he must be kept somehow until an opportunity for sending him arose. I made my native sergeant responsible for him that night, and went to bed.

In the morning he was gone. It was no time for idle reprobation. The sergeant had slept at his side; in the morning he awoke and found himself alone, and a pair of broken handcuffs were picked up in the station square. That was all. But he (the sergeant) asked only for one man and a rope, and upon his head would it be if he did not bring him back before sunset.

In the silent hour between the trade wind and the land breeze, while there was still light enough to see a screw-pine against the grey sky, Kaikai was again before me. In his dusky features I thought I read a calm determination that recked nothing of such trifling checks as a re-capture, but this might have been the effect of the failing light. The sergeant and his satellite had beat the country-side until, towards evening, they found a lonely pool inviting them to bathe. There was something splashing in the water, and they crept up softly to reconnoitre. It was Kaikai, disporting his burly limbs in the bath and blowing like a grampus. Between them and him lay his clothes, and the bone of a stolen ham that had been his mid-day meal. The pursuers captured his loin-cloth, and hid themselves to await developments. When Kaikai came out to dress there followed a scene that I shall not attempt to describe, and two clothed policemen might have been seen speeding over the hills in pursuit of a naked fugitive. Then the sergeant, whose wind was impaired by the ease and comfort of official life, cunningly bridged the increasing interval between pursuers and pursued with his throwing-club, and Kaika bit the dust. He bowed to the force of circumstances, and allowed

himself to be bound and led back without opposition. He spent the night handcuffed on either side to a policeman, and in the morning he was led to judgment for breaking his confinement. He addressed the court with calm dignity. It was true! but there was a cause. It was the beating—a form of punishment to which he could never submit. Let the magistrate be fair-minded, and exchange the beating for a year's imprisonment, and he would never escape. Otherwise, it might occur again. He was led back with an augmented penalty, never again to be uncoupled from his policeman till put on board a vessel bound for Suva.

For two whole days he stayed while I strove in vain to charter a cutter to take him to the capital. On the third he took his policeman with him to bathe. As they stood on the brink of the stream, Kaikai condoled with his guardian on the cruel necessity that forced him to enter the cold water when he might be enjoying a cigarette on the bank. 'It was nothing to him (Kaikai), of course, but he could not help pitying the discomfort of a gentlemanly policeman who was bound eternally to a lowborn convict like twins of a birth, when with the turn of a key he might have rest combined with security. But this young magistrate treated his police like children, pretending that he could not trust them.' So shrewdly did he play upon the man's vanity that the key was turned, and the end of the handcuffs transferred to the prisoner's other wrist. To the connecting chain the policeman fastened a rope, and tied the free end securely to a tree. Then he went a bare five paces to fetch a dry banana leaf for a tobacco-wrapper. When he came back the rope was lying in the water. Had Kaikai drowned himself? Panic-stricken, he jerked the end, and it came up empty. Kaikai had vanished. The wretched policeman rushed off in vain pursuit, imploring his absent friend to return and all would be forgiven. On a rock hard by he found the handcuffs battered and broken.

For the next ten days Kaikai was at large. I heard of him occasionally as frequenting his village at nights and spending the day somewhere in the bush, but the police could never find him because rumours had reached them that he went about armed with a mission axe, and thirsted for policemen's blood. One night a messenger came to tell me a weighty secret. Kaikai was asleep in a certain house in Singatoka, and might be betrayed if a Jael could be found. My sergeant, when consulted, thought that a Judas would be better, and cheerfully offered himself for the post.

Taking with him a friend, who, he assured me, was cursed with an exuberance of personal courage that he had been trying for years to discharge, he went off with a pair of handcuffs and a candle-end, and a short club concealed in the back of his shirt. The unconscious Kaikai awoke as they went in, but they soothed him with soft speeches, telling him how strongly they approved of his attitude in the matter of flogging, and reprobated the whole bench of magistrates to which I was the newest and least promising addition. Then they all three swore blood-brotherhood and went to sleep. In the morning Kaikai awoke, stretched himself, cleared his throat, girt his sulu round him, and moved towards the door. The sergeant and his courageous friend, who had been shamming sleep, were before him, and barred the door with their bodies. Kaikai took in the situation without emotion. He simply reached for his axe that was stuck in the thatch, and swung it above his head, saying, 'Out of the way, both of you!' Then he walked out, and the sergeant and his bold friend were found some time afterwards among the bananas, looking, so they said, for Kaikai—at least, this was the account of a bystander; the sergeant's story was different.

Thenceforward the fugitive became bolder. He even took his meals in the village, and thus again he fell into my hands. Before breakfast one morning a spy came breathless to whisper that Kaikai was eating in the Buli's house five miles distant. In three minutes I was trotting along with handcuffs and a tether-rope jingling from the dees of my saddle, and an active young policeman running at my stirrup. We stopped outside the village to reconnoitre, unobserved of any but the pigs, and my spy walked boldly into the house as if he had come to share the meal. In a few moments he came back to say that Kaikai was eating yams close to the back door, and that our only chance was for me to ride to the front door at full gallop while the policeman embarrassed his escape from the rear. I moved my mare among the houses until I could see a bullet head in the vista of the two doorways of the house two hundred yards away. I rammed in the spurs and scattered the pigs on the *rara* at a hard gallop. I flung myself from the saddle and through the door almost with the same motion, leaving my mare to bolt for home or eat the banana shoots as she liked. My man was half out of the back-door with his mouth full of yam, but here he met my ally, and in his momentary hesitation I got my arms round his greasy neck. He grunted,

spat the yam at the policeman, and fell to yelling at the top of his voice. He was strong, but I had my knees against the lintels of the door, and so I got him down on his back on the mats, and he surrendered. We apologised to our hosts for disturbing their breakfast, and formed a homeward procession followed by all the naked children in the village and half the pigs. Kaikai led the cortège, handcuffed with his hands behind him and fastened to my saddle with a rope. His anxiety about the teeth of the fierce beast that snorted so close to his bare shoulders evidently drove out for a time all thoughts of escape.

It was no use waiting any longer for a passing vessel. Until Kaikai could be lodged safely in Suva Gaol I should know no rest. Besides, after this last capture he was resigned almost to penitence, and he was scarcely more likely to escape when travelling along the coast under escort than when living in a grass hut on the station. He was brought up and warned that any further attempt to escape would simply increase his punishment, to which he answered sadly, 'It is true!' as who should say, 'Would that I had realised it long ago!' Two policemen were picked for the escort—the one for his intelligence and the other for his muscle—and Mind was given authority over Matter. Kaikai was led out handcuffed and roped to the escort, who undertook to land him safely in Suva on the fifth day. They set out full of high hope, full of confidence in themselves and in each other. Alas! that such enthusiasm should have been so rudely dashed! Six miles out they came to the river Singatoka, and demanded a canoe in accordance with their instructions. Every dug-out capable of floating was up the river for a festival, and if they waited for a canoe they must wait for two days. The swim was nothing for a Fijian—a paltry half-mile—but it was clear that Kaikai could not swim with comfort in handcuffs. Mind accordingly unlocked them, tied one end of the rope round Kaikai's neck, and gave the other to Muscle to hold between his teeth. For the first hundred yards or so they swam side by side; then Kaikai began to forge ahead. As he turned round to encourage his escort his face suddenly froze with horror, and he shouted 'A Ngio! A Ngio!' ('A shark! A shark!'). Neither Mind nor Muscle stopped to look; they dropped the rope and swam for their lives. Kaikai did the same, and to swim the faster he undid the rope from his neck. It was then seen how much faster than his escort he could swim, and when he waded ashore his guards were still

striking out in mid-stream. He even found time to wish them farewell before plunging into the bush. As he knew every inch of the country and his escort did not it was useless to pursue, and Mind decided upon retreat to the station. That night the criers proclaimed through the villages a reward for the body of Kaikai, and the people muttered remarks disrespectful to a Government that couldn't keep a prisoner when they had got him. Feeling themselves absolved from any obligation to help the authorities, they fed Kaikai and made life pleasant to him; and thus it might have been till now had not the 'young man's fancy lightly turned to thoughts of love.' The beloved object was not unappropriated, and the husband, returning from his plantation in the evening, thought that sympathy with misfortune could be perfectly genuine without embraces. Revenge, too, in this case would be not only sweet but profitable. He took two trusty friends into his confidence, and lay in wait in the path along which Kaikai was wont to go to his assignation. They leaped upon him, bearing him down with their united weight, and carried him bound into the village. There they divided the blood-money between them at the rate of six and eightpence apiece. That night I chartered and victualled a cutter, and in the early dawn Kaikai was taken on board and manacled to a stout ring-bolt in the deck. When I had satisfied myself as to the strength of the fastenings, I pocketed the key and went on shore; they might loose him as they pleased in Suva, but on the voyage at least he would touch the soft hearts of his guards in vain. A week later I was given the gaoler's receipt for the body of Kaikai testifying to the interesting fact that he was 'sober' when he was delivered to him, and I slept that night in calm security, for doubtless by that time the flogging to which Kaikai had so deeply rooted an antipathy had been impartially administered.

That was on a Tuesday. On Wednesday morning at breakfast-time my usually stolid sergeant ran in with evil tidings bursting out of every pore. 'Sir,' he cried, 'I have just seen Kaikai dressed in the habit of a local preacher!' I was too much startled even to think of the Society for Psychical Research. Had Kaikai sent his spirit to impersonate him in order to complete my discomfiture? But the sergeant scouted the idea of supernatural agency. It was Kaikai in the flesh that he had seen, wanting only a book of devotions to complete his clerical attire. He had cheerfully wished the sergeant good morning, and seemed to be at peace

with all the world. The sergeant's sense of the decencies had been so outraged that he had not stopped to question him; and therefore, until Kaikai could be interviewed or next mail arrive from Suva, his miraculous escape must remain a mystery.

Further tidings followed hard on the heels of the sergeant. The villagers had made a feast to Kaikai, and the maidens had danced in his honour. He was friendly to all, but a little supercilious, as befits one who is on the high road to be a national hero. Not until three bowls of yankona had loosened his tongue-strings did he vouchsafe an explanation of his re-appearance. He had enjoyed the hospitality of the Colonial Government for one night only. On the morrow he was ordered to fall in with the road gang. Even this he did, being in all respects conciliatory; but when they came to serve out pickaxes and shovels he felt that he had been humbled enough. They had told him, moreover, that a tail or two was wanting from the cat, and that he must wait a day while they plaited new ones before his cup should be full. So, in the face of the whole gang, warders and all, he said, 'Forgive me, but I am going,' cleared the stone wall at the back of the jail, disappeared into the forest, and stopped to listen to his pursuers. They were running straight up the hill in the thick bush—almost abreast of him indeed—and they would probably run like that till they reached the Waimanu road. In the meantime his sulu did him no credit. It was dirty, and had S. G. conspicuously branded across the breech. He must have a new outfit before starting on his travels. So he ran downhill towards the town, skirting the Polynesian settlement, dropped into the road at Nambukulou, walked briskly past two policemen, and made for the store of an Indian. The Indian had a pigtail and no calves to his legs, and was even in other respects altogether contemptible; but there were sulus and shirts hanging in his doorway far too good to be the property of any Indian, pigtailed or no.

It chanced that this Indian was transacting a matter of business with a neighbour in mid-street—probably the neighbour owed him money—at any rate, they were both shouting and gesticulating to each other in the middle of a crowd, so Kaikai unobtrusively took down a white shirt and sulu, and reached to the counter for a black satinet tie such as the local preachers use. Then he went back into the bush to dress, and listened for the Indians when they should find out what he had done. As a local preacher, Kaikai scarcely knew himself. He felt at once that he

had mistaken his vocation. The stiff front seemed to tap all the sources of the pent-up eloquence of a heathen priest. That, of course, was what he had been bred for before the luckless turn of the wheel made him a hen-stealer. But this was no time for moralising. He walked boldly now to Walu Bay, passing on the way a gaol-warder running to Suva with the news of his escape. In Walu Bay there was a canoe belonging to a native minister from the other side who had gone into town to buy a bottle of kerosine for the Sabbath. There is, as Kaikai knew, a community of property among ministers of the Gospel, and Kaikai as local preacher was in far greater need of the canoe than was its owner. So he took it and paddled himself out into the harbour. As he rested on his paddle the shouts of his pursuers sounded from the hillside musically in his ears. He landed near Namuka Island, ungratefully kicked the canoe out into the current, and started on his forlorn tramp. It was almost a royal progress. At each village he told a different story, paltering, alas, with the sacred truth, but improving so artistically with each narration that at the end he had almost come to believe it himself. The usual official notice offering a reward for the apprehension of an escaped prisoner, medium height, powerful frame, short hair, dark skin, tatooed with 'A. A.' on the right forearm, proved the truth of the first part of the story, and a lacrimose Indian and the pieces of a broken canoe gave some colour to the latter portion; but, for the rest, it must be remembered that Kaikai was by heredity a liar. To the elders of his native village Kaikai spoke of me without animus, as of one to whom respect was due but whose duties lay in a different sphere from his. 'It no longer concerns the magistrate. It is their affair in Suva. He has done with me; therefore, what reason should I have to fear him?' Next morning, for the sixth time, I found myself on Kaikai's trail. The promise of a reward brought many volunteers. We surrounded the village, and went into the house and captured him in all his finery, without the shadow of resistance. He was surprised, of course, but not cast down. The flogging had now come to seem so far off that imprisonment had lost its terrors for him. Again he was conveyed to the capital, chained to a ring-bolt in the deck of a cutter. Again I breathed freely, taking comfort to myself that I had posted to the jailer a gentle sarcasm upon the security of his arrangements. Three weeks passed; my duties took me through Nandronga to Fort Carnarvan in the mountains. One evening as

I went the rounds I heard the word 'Kaikai' in the babble of conversation in one of the barrack houses. Was the word an adjective or a proper name?¹ I called out the corporal and asked him. He looked like a man who would fain not betray a confidence; but, when I pressed him, he said reluctantly that Kaikai had been seen on the road below the fort that evening, dressed in the uniform of a soldier. So he was out again. This time, at least, I would wash my hands of him. Two of the men had met him in the road, and recognised him. He told them he was carrying a message to me from the magistrate on the Rewa. But when they offered to conduct him to my presence he would fain be excused, giving a variety of reasons for putting off the interview. He had undergone his flogging, and had even worked some weeks in the road gang; but he found the life irksome, and he left it. This time he stole a new sulu, and exchanged it with a Polynesian for an old one, vandyked round the bottom like the uniform of the armed constabulary. Then he stole a turkey-red cummerbund, and he would even have stolen a uniform belt if he had had time. As it was, he put on the largest turban he could find, and took to the bush as he was. On the first day he reached the Rewa station, walked boldly into the magistrate's house, saluted, and stood at attention. He was under orders, he said, to carry despatches to Fort Carnarvan. His despatches? He regretted to say that he had lost them in swimming the river. His belt? That, too, had been swept away by the flood. The *locum tenens* at Rewa, who liked not the insolent ways of the gay and licentious soldiery, bade him begone, and the journey from the station to the fort across the mountains had taken him two days.

I was tired of Kaikai. He had become monotonous, and I pursued him no more. I heard afterwards that he was caught, and made to serve out his time; but I was transferred to another district, and saw nothing of him for two years.

Long afterwards, when I was in Suva, a boat pulled up from Navua with the mangled, but still living body of a native burglar. A store had been set on fire and broken into, and the European store-keeper roughly handled. The contents had been looted and the burglars had got safe away; but the native police discovered the culprits, and succeeded in arresting all but one. That one eluded arrest for several days, but at last the pursuers came upon him in the bush, and, because he would not surrender, had

¹ In the local dialect *Kaikai* means 'strong.'

brought him down with throwing-clubs and battered his helpless body as he lay upon the ground. Then they brought him to the hospital to be mended.

The other four culprits were tried, and, before sentence, were asked by the court whether they had anything to say in extenuation. 'Sir,' said their spokesman, 'the root of this matter was Kaikai. He seduced us to do this thing. We therefore are innocent. It was on this wise. Kaikai came into our house in the evening and said, "Erone, let us have prayers." So we had prayers. Then Kaikai said, "How would it be to go and break open the white man's store?" And we said, "It is well." So we went to the store, and when we came near, Kaikai said, "How would it be to set the store on fire, and then perhaps the white man will come out?" So we set the store on fire, and presently the white man did come out. Then Kaikai said, "Let us trample on him." So we trampled him under foot, and then we took his box of money and ran towards the river, and when we came to the river, as the box was so heavy, Kaikai dropped it in—it was afterwards found there—'and then we all went home.'

'And what did you do then?' asked the court.

'Kaikai read prayers.'

There was no hope for Kaikai. His arm was broken, his thigh-bone smashed in two places, and his skull fractured, and all this had been done four days before he reached the hospital. It was so extraordinary a case of vitality that, when I heard of it, not knowing who the patient was, I went to see him, and in the wretched remains of humanity, strapped up and bandaged almost beyond recognition, I saw and knew the features of Kaikai. He was wasted to skin and bone, poor fellow, and weakening every hour; but he was conscious and recognised me, and I think was pleased that I, with whom the earlier stages of his career had been so much bound up, should have come to see him in the last. He lived four days, and was buried in the hospital cemetery, and I was just too late to attend his funeral as chief mourner. And so, when his companions in guilt came to be sentenced, they suffered alone, for Kaikai, who had seduced them, had gone to stand before another tribunal, where, I think, hereditary tendencies and personal bravery must count for something.

EXILE.

WHEN day's long course of toil is done,
 Before the rest of night,
 I stand to watch the setting sun
 Drop slowly out of sight.

Then in the clouds I love to trace
 The forms of hill and plain,
 And think I see my native place,
 My distant home again.

I love the wind that blows from thence
 With news I long to hear ;
 I love the wind that blows from hence,
 My greeting oft to bear.

Across the silent deep blue skies
 Seek out my home, O breeze !
 Beyond the seven hills it lies,
 Beyond the seven seas.

How blue those heaving seas and deep,
 How high those parting hills,
 The sunbeams on their green crests sleep,
 Their vales the shadow fills.

O land of youth, O vanished land,
 I seek a distant shore,
 And can I ever hope to stand
 Upon thy mountains more ?

Or in that country where I go,
 My weary wanderings past,
 Shall I look round about, and know
 My native home at last ?

AN EVENING CHAT IN JAMAICA.

OF all seas the Caribbean has no foolish flatterers. And our passengers (though having nearly all travelled up from Peru, or further Chili, we thought ourselves well seasoned) for the most part had small appetites and feigned sleep.

Said one, 'It has four distinct motions ; a pitch and toss, a roll, and a wriggle !'

'You are all hard to please. Look at it blue and rippling. It is behaving as prettily as it can,' returned the Captain. He wore a twinkling smile, a white suit, and a straw hat set jauntily on one side of his head. Then aside to the lady who sat on his right hand at meals—

'Why on earth are they all reading "The English in the West Indies ?"'

'It is Froude's Gospel of Jamaica to most of us. We want to get some ideas beforehand.'

'Don't quote his opinions to the planters unless you want to raise a storm during your stay. Froude looks on everything from the blackest point of view. He seems to have met one disappointed individual whose lamentations he chronicles word for word. Now I, who have sailed here for years, think Jamaica quite a rich little island. Look at her monopolies of exports ; her rum, logwood, pimento—the fruit trade with the States. Of course her old days of prosperity are gone by, I grant you.'

'For the matter of that, one hears something about depression even in England. In India too ; while as to trade in Chili and Peru, where I have just been staying, it is growing more difficult every day for the English to gain a livelihood.'

'Exactly so. They might be worse off here. Well, I must leave you now, and see about taking the ship safely into Kingston. Try to see and hear several sides of the question if you can. You will soon get the celebrated first sight of the Blue Mountains and the harbour, which roused "Tom Cringle," Froude, and other travellers to such a height of enthusiasm.'

Jamaica indeed loomed high and blue to starboard : the sea lulled to a dead calm. Ahead lay the once famous hell haunt of buccaneers and blood-boats, Port Royal ; now sunk by its great

earthquake to a low green landspit and a handful of houses. Behind these, Kingston gleamed white against a background of dark mountain bases and low rolling clouds. Suddenly a swift tropical shower blurred the view and drenched the decks clear of all idlers. Later, my first impression of Jamaica was a dripping jumble of palm trees, ships' bowsprits, and Kingston houses, mixed up among black coal mounds.

By good luck, the Captain's parting counsel became a possibility. It appeared that the Acting Governor was awaiting my arrival to offer a delightful hospitality, but expected me, through some mistake, to arrive from North America. Not knowing this at first, I drove straight on landing to a quiet hotel frequented more by island families than winter visitors. Here for two days it rained—torrents!

The graceful bamboos were all a-rustle, and the gorgeous pink and crimson flowers, hibiscus, poinsettias, and corallines were drenched, while the tortured palm trees bowed their crowned heads, uselessly trying to escape from the lashing wind. This was in October, the rainy month, it should be explained.

Two nights while our cane "rockers" tapped rhythmically the polished floor, bare for sake of coolness, and while the warm rain streamed incessantly down before the open windows from black darkness, sat opposite groups engaged in talk upon one subject. They were inquirers and informants, new-comers and planters.

The former spoke little but to ask questions. The latter only ceased talk to light up for a fresh smoke, that kept mosquitoes off, except the most virulent.

Weather-bound were the said planters. For after coming down from their estates in the hills to shop and sleep in town, the rain proved too violent next day to be faced. Worse still, by evening came messages passed on by wire and telephone that two rivers were swollen and impassable. Bridges in Jamaica are few and low, and in the case of one of these luckless individuals of little use, as his road obliged him to drive his buggy and horses along the sea-coast past the wide mouths of two rivers. This calls to one's mind the Jamaican proverb, 'No call alligator longmouth till you pass him.'

Speaking of sugar in the island, this planter told me that the estates are small and the machinery very poor in Jamaica, compared with the great cane-fields and mills I had lately seen in Peru.

'But still we get along—and manage to make a small profit. Rum is the one thing in which no place can excel Jamaica. And a strange thing about it is, that one big estate will produce only common stuff while a little one close by may be making the very finest spirit possible, at six, seven, or eight shillings a gallon. The cause seems to be from some difference in the soil. But what that is, no man can say. And here a planter has to be his own engineer and chemist, if he wants to succeed.'

'As to the cane plants themselves, we cannot irrigate them at will and so bring them to the perfection that is gained in Peru. Still they do well, and in some gullies where surface soil is washed down from the surrounding higher ground, the canes have not been replanted within living memory. Again, other large estates always need to be fresh planted after the second cut.'

'A great pest of the cane-fields here is a plant called cow-itch. This is somewhat like the scarlet runner, and it sheds from the outside of its pods a down that causes acute pain. Should cow-itch infest a patch of cane, this brake must be burned to prevent the mischief spreading widely afield.'

'One day,' said our informant, 'I was riding through my fields and complained to a negress that one corner was not sufficiently cleared of the loose leaves. She told me, "Too much cow-itch in it." Not believing her, I got down from my horse and lifted some of the leaves myself. Heugh! how they stung! I could hardly keep from showing the pain, so mounted again and rode away without a word. But when I had got once out of sight, down I jumped pretty sharp and rubbed my hand well with earth.'

This gentleman also told me something of the chinchona growth which has been fostered here recently by Government. It is known better under the form of quinine at home, and is a comparatively new attempt, which so far has been only a failure.

'What of sessel hemp, which has also lately been introduced into the island?' I queried.

'I fear our soil is too rich for it,' said the planter, thoughtfully. 'My own experience is that the sessel hemp thrives best on very poor land; just as does our big aloe, here called "May-pole" by the people, because on May-day their grandsires and grandams used to dance around it.'

But after all, judging from what this planter and several others told me, whatever crops are under discussion, whether pimento, logwood, or bananas and oranges, coffee remains the finest present

product of Jamaica. For the Blue Mountain and the Peaberry kinds—the latter being the finer of the two—have no equals, perhaps even in Mocha. They are bought up a year before grown for the Liverpool market, and are here supposed to be all intended for Russia.

The Peaberry derives its name from an apparent freak of nature, one round pea instead of twin seeds being found within the coffee berry, and containing a double flavour. These single berries, or peas, are hand-picked from out of the general mass. Some of the best coffee plantations are said to be quite small, but situated in favoured gullies in the hills where the soil is extremely rich, being an alluvial deposit brought down by streams and winter torrents. As with canes, so with the coffee. Many of the latter grounds need replanting after sixteen years. But the Blue Mountain trees are famous for being perhaps sixty years of age.

‘Coffee growing exhausts the soil so utterly that the land must lie fallow afterwards,’ explained our Gamaliel. ‘‘The salt-petre has got into the coffee, sah,” is the niggers’ favourite expression when they pull up a tree to show you that it is rotten at the roots. Now considering that there is no salt-petre in the whole island, how and whence they ever got their idea of its qualities is a mystery to me.’

The process of preparing coffee berries for market was now briefly explained to me by this kind acquaintance. When gathered, red and round as cherries, the berries are subjected to the only machine used throughout in the work. This is not unlike a nutmeg-grater, or graters, which free the twin beans inside the berry from their fleshy covering, leaving them clean and blue. They are then sun-dried, and on the best plantations this is done by spreading them on barbecues, or cement terraces, sloped so as to allow rain to run off quickly, having gutters all around and one raised place in the middle. The beans are raked constantly to expose all of them in turn to the sun; but should there be any signs of rain coming over the sky, the whole crop is gathered with haste into a heap in the raised centre, and a shelter-house on wheels is drawn over them while the bad weather lasts. Last of all, the berries are hand-picked with care, and the finest are put aside.

‘Labour is at present the great drawback of our island,’ ended the planter. ‘See what thousands of acres are lying waste in the mountains! I don’t blame Quashey for sneaking off high up there

and settling himself down free of any landlord. It's a great temptation instead of having to pay me rent of 1*l.* an acre; though in the latter case if one goes up to measure what he is really cultivating, it turns out to be five or six acres, instead of the two he was at first given.'

'But that seems a rather heavy rent. How can he bring his produce down to Spanish Town, or Kingston, and sell it?'

'On his wife's and childrens' heads; also on jackass-back; last of all on his own. He generally rides up on his ass to his ground of a morning, wife and children filing after him; then the wife works hard, and perhaps he does a little, or else he lies on his back.'

'But you have coolie labour now in Jamaica?'

'Certainly. Without that we could never get on; for it is no longer as in old days when the slaves were concentrated on the estates. Each coolie costs over 16*l.* to the Indian Government, half in passage money coming here, and the rest either for their return journey or as bounty in case they choose to stay after their time is out—but few do. They are very good labourers, and I like the coolies.'

These East Indian coolies are now quite an oriental feature in this West Indian island. A visit to their village at Mona is like being transplanted to the other side of the globe. The coolies are induced to come out here by Government agents, and are indentured for a fixed time; their industrial service in the colony lasting for a term of ten years. In return their employers guarantee them work for six days in the week, at 1*s.* per day for men and 9*d.* for women. Hospitals are provided for them carefully by the Government, and in sickness a coolie receives his half-pay until he is recovered.

Whereupon our talk ended that night. For early hours are necessary in Jamaica, where people rise at six, or often five, to avoid being out later in the great heat of mid-day. Our planter had ordered his buggy and horses even before cockerow, *at half-past two!* By daylight he trusted to reach his first ford, where, if the river had not fallen, he must needs await its doing so.

THE SOWERS.

BY HENRY SETON MERRIMAN,
AUTHOR OF 'WITH EDGED TOOLS,' ETC.

CHAPTER XLI.

DUTY.

It was not now a very cold night. There were fleecy clouds thrown like puffs of smoke against the western sky. The moon, on the wane—a small crescent lying on its back—was lowering towards the horizon. The thermometer had risen since sunset, as it often does in March. There was a suggestion of spring in the air. It seemed that at last the long winter was drawing to a close, that the iron grip of frost was relaxing.

Paul went out and inspected the harness by the light of a stable lantern held in the mitten hand of a yemschick. He had reasons of his own for absenting himself while Catrina bade her mother farewell. He was rather afraid of these women.

The harness inspected, he began reckoning how many hours of moonlight might still be vouchsafed to him. The stableman, seeing the direction of his gaze, began to talk of the weather and the possibilities of snow in the near future. They conversed in low voices together.

Presently the door opened and Catrina came quickly out, followed by a servant carrying a small hand-bag.

Paul could not see Catrina's face. She was veiled, and furred to the eyelids. Without a word the girl took her seat in the sleigh, and the servant prepared the bearskin rugs. Paul gathered up the reins and took his place beside her. A few moments were required to draw up the rugs and fasten them with straps; then Paul gave the word and the horses leapt forward.

As they sped down the avenue Catrina turned and looked her last on Thors.

Before long Paul wheeled into the trackless forest. He had come very carefully, steering chiefly by the moon and stars, with occasional assistance from a bend of the winding river. At times he had taken to the ice, following the course of the stream for a

few miles. No snow had fallen ; it would be easy to return on his own track. Through this part of the forest no road was cut.

For nearly half an hour they drove in silence. Only the whistle of the iron-bound runners on the powdery snow, the creak of the warming leather on the horses, the regular breathing of the team, broke the stillness of the forest. Paul hoped against hope that Catrina was asleep. She sat by his side, her arm touching his sleeve, her weight thrown against him at such times as the sleigh bumped over a fallen tree or some inequality of the ground.

He could not help wondering what thoughts there were behind her silence. Steinmetz's good-natured banter had come back to his memory during the last few days in a new light.

'Paul,' said the woman at his side quite suddenly, breaking the silence of the great forest where they had grown to life and sorrow almost side by side.

'Yes.'

'I want to know how this all came about. It is not my father's doing. There is something quick, and practical, and wise which suggests you and Herr Steinmetz. I suspect that you have done this—you and he—for our happiness.'

'No,' answered Paul ; 'it was mere accident. Your father heard of our trouble in Kiew. You know him—always impulsive and reckless. He never thinks of the danger. He came to help us.'

Catrina smiled wanly.

'But it *is* for our happiness, is it not, Paul ? You know that it is—that is why you have done it. I have not had time yet to realise what I am doing, all that is going to happen. But if it is your doing, I think I shall be content to abide by the result.'

'It is not my doing,' replied Paul, who did not like her wistful tone. 'It is the outcome of circumstances. Circumstances have been ruling us all lately. We seem to have no time to consider, but only to do that which seems best for the moment.'

'And it is best that I should go to America with my father?' Her voice was composed and quiet. In the dim light he could not see her white lips ; indeed, he never looked.

'It seems so to me, undoubtedly,' he said. 'In doing this, so far as we can see at present, it seems certain that you are saving your father from Siberia. You know what he is ; he never thinks of his own safety. He ought never to have come here to-night.'

If he remains in Russia it is an absolute certainty that he will sooner or later be re-arrested. He is one of those good people who require saving from themselves.'

Catrina nodded. At times Duty is the kedge-anchor of Happiness. The girl was dimly aware that she was holding to this. She was simple and unsophisticated enough to consider Paul's opinion infallible. At the great cross-roads of life we are apt to ask the way of anybody who happens to be near. Catrina might perhaps have made a worse choice of counsel, for Paul was honest.

'As you put it,' she said, 'it is clearly my duty. There is a sort of consolation in that, however painful it may be at the time. I suppose it is consolatory to look back and think that at all events one did one's duty.'

'I don't know,' answered Paul simply; 'I suppose so.'

Looking back was not included in his method of life, which was rather characterised by a large faith and a forward pressure. Whenever there was question of considering life as an abstract he drew within his shell with a manlike shyness. He had no generalities ready for each emergency.

'Would father have gone alone?' she asked, with a very human thrill of hope in her voice.

'No,' answered Paul steadily, 'I think not. But you can ask him.'

They had never been so distant as they were at this moment—so cold, such mere acquaintances. And they had played together in one nursery.

'Of course, if that is the case,' said the girl, 'my duty is quite clear.'

'It required some persuasion to make him consent to go, even with you,' said Paul.

A rough piece of going—for there was no road—debarred further conversation at this time. The sledge rolled and bumped over one fallen tree after another. Paul, with his feet stretched out, wedged firmly into the sleigh, encouraged the tired horses with rein and voice. Catrina was compelled to steady herself with both hands on the bar of the apron; for the apron of a Russian sleigh is a heavy piece of leather stretched on a wooden bar.

'Then you think my duty is quite clear,' repeated the girl at length.

Paul did not answer at once.

'I am sure of it,' he said.

And there the question ended. Catrina Lanovitch, who had never been ruled by those about her, shaped her whole life unquestioningly upon an opinion.

They did not speak for some time, and then it was the girl who broke the silence.

'I have a confession to make and a favour to ask,' she said bluntly.

Paul's attitude denoted attention, but he said nothing.

'It is about the Baron de Chauxville,' she said.

'Ah!'

'I am a coward,' she went on. 'I did not know it before. It is rather humiliating. I have been trying for some weeks to tell you something, but I am horribly afraid of it. I am afraid you will despise me. I have been a fool—worse perhaps. I never knew that Claude de Chauxville was the sort of person he is. I allowed him to find out things about me which he never should have known—my own private affairs, I mean. Then I became frightened, and he tried to make use of me. I think he makes use of everybody. *You* know what he is.'

'Yes,' answered Paul, 'I know.'

'He hates you,' she went on. 'I do not want to make mischief, but I suppose he wanted to marry the Princess. His vanity was wounded because she preferred you, and he wanted to be avenged upon you. Wounds to the vanity never heal. I do not know how he did it, Paul, but he made me help him in his schemes. I could have prevented you from going to the bear hunt, for I suspected him then. I could have prevented my mother from inviting him to Thors. I could have put a thousand difficulties in his way, but I did not. I helped him. I told him about the people and who were the worst—who had been influenced by the Nihilists and who would not work. I allowed him to stay on here and carry out his plan. All this trouble among the peasants is his handiwork. He has organised a regular rising against you. He is horribly clever. He left us yesterday, but I am convinced that he is in the neighbourhood still.'

She stopped and reflected. There was something wanting in the story which she could not supply. It was a motive. A half-confession is almost an impossibility. When we speak of ourselves it must be all or nothing—preferably, nothing.

'I do not know why I did it,' she said. 'It was a sort of period I went through. I cannot explain.'

He did not ask her to do so. They were singularly like brother and sister in their mental attitude. They had driven through twenty miles of forest which belonged to one or other of them. Each was touched by the intangible, inexplicable dignity that belongs to the possession of great lands—to the inheritance of a great name.

'That is the confession,' she said.

He gave a little laugh.

'If none of us had worse than that upon our consciences,' he answered, 'there would be little harm in the world. De Chauxville's schemes have only hurried on a crisis which was foreordained. The progress of humanity cannot be stayed. They have tried to stay it in this country. They will go on trying until the crash comes. What is the favour you have to ask?'

'You must leave Osterno,' she urged earnestly; 'it is unsafe to delay even a few hours. Monsieur de Chauxville said there would be no danger. I believed him then, but I do not now. Besides, I know the peasants. They are hard to rouse, but once excited they are uncontrollable. They are afraid of nothing. You must get away to-night.'

Paul made no answer.

She turned slowly in her seat and looked into his face by the light of the waning moon.

'Do you mean that you will not go?'

He met her glance with his grave, slow smile.

'There is no question of going,' he answered. 'You must know that.'

She did not attempt to persuade. Perhaps there was something in his voice which she as a Russian understood—a ring of that which we call pig-headedness in others.

'It must be splendid to be a man,' she said suddenly in a ringing voice. 'One feeling in me made me ask you the favour, while another was a sense of gladness at your certain refusal. I wish I were a man. I envy you. You do not know how I envy you, Paul.'

Paul gave a quiet laugh—such a laugh as one hears in the trenches after the low hum of a passing ball.

'If it is danger you want, you will have more than I in the next week,' he answered. 'Steinmetz and I knew that you were

the only woman in Russia who could get your father safely out of the country. That is why I came for you.'

The girl did not answer at once. They were driving on the road again now, and the sleigh was running smoothly.

'I suppose,' she said reflectively at length, 'that the secret of the enormous influence you exercise over all who come in contact with you is that you drag the best out of everyone—the best that is in them.'

Paul did not answer.

'What is that light?' she asked suddenly, laying her hand on the thick fur of his sleeve. She was not nervous, but very watchful. 'There—straight in front.'

'It is the sleigh,' replied Paul, 'with your father and Steinmetz. I arranged that they should meet us at the cross-roads. You must be at the Volga before daylight. Send the horses on to Tver. I have given you Minna and The Warrior; they can do the journey with one hour's rest, but you must drive them.'

Catrina had swayed forward against the bar of the apron in a strange way, for the road was quite smooth. She placed her gloved hands on the bar and held herself upright with a peculiar effort.

'What?' said Paul. For she had made an inarticulate sound.

'Nothing,' she answered. Then, after a pause, 'I did not know that we were to go so soon. That was all.'

CHAPTER XLII.

THE STORM BURSTS.

THE large drawing-room was brilliantly lighted. Another weary day had dragged to its close. It was the Tuesday evening—the last Tuesday in March five years ago. The Starosta had not been near the castle all day. Steinmetz and Paul had never lost sight of the ladies since breakfast-time. They had not ventured out of doors. There was in the atmosphere a sense of foreboding—the stillness of a crisis. Etta had been defiant and silent—a dangerous humour—all day. Maggie had watched Paul's face with steadfast quiet eyes full of courage, but she knew now that there was danger.

The conversation at breakfast and luncheon had been main-

tained by Steinmetz—always collected and a little humorous. It was now dinner-time. The whole castle was brilliantly lighted as if for a great assembly of guests. During the last week a fuller state—a greater ceremony—had been observed by Paul's orders, and Steinmetz had thought more than once of that historical event which appealed to his admiration most—the Indian mutiny.

Maggie was in the drawing-room alone. She was leaning one hand and arm on the mantelpiece, looking thoughtfully into the fire. The rustle of silk made her turn her head. It was Etta, beautifully dressed, with a white face and eyes dull with suspense.

'I think it is warmer to-night,' said Maggie, urged by a sudden necessity of speech, hampered by a sudden chill at the heart.

'Yes,' answered Etta. And she shivered.

For a moment there was a little silence and Etta looked at the clock. It was ten minutes to seven.

A high wind was blowing, the first of the equinoctial gales heralding the Spring. The sound of the wind in the great chimney was like the moaning of high rigging at sea.

The door opened and Steinmetz came in. Etta's face hardened, her lips closed with a snap. Steinmetz looked at her and at Maggie. For once he seemed to have no pleasantry ready for use. He walked towards a table where some books and newspapers lay in pleasant profusion. He was standing there when Paul came into the room. The Prince glanced at Maggie. He saw where his wife stood, but he did not look at her.

Steinmetz was writing something on half a sheet of notepaper, in pencil. He pushed it across the table towards Paul, who drew it nearer to him.

'Are you armed?' were the written words.

Paul crushed the paper in the hollow of his hand and threw it into the fire, where it burnt away. He also glanced at the clock. It was five minutes to seven.

Suddenly the door was thrown open and a manservant rushed in—pale, confused, terror-stricken. He was a giant footman in the gorgeous livery of the Alexis.

'Excellency,' he stammered in Russian, 'the castle is surrounded—they will kill us—they will burn us out—'

He stopped abashed before Paul's pointing finger and stony face.

'Leave the room!' said Paul. 'You forget yourself.'

Through the open doorway to which Paul pointed peered the ashen faces of other servants huddled together like sheep.

'Leave the room!' repeated Paul, and the man obeyed him, walking to the door unsteadily with quivering chin. On the threshold he paused. Paul stood pointing to the door. He had a poise of the head—some sudden awakening of the blood that had coursed in the veins of hereditary potentates. Maggie looked at him; she had never known him like this. She had known the man, she had never encountered the Prince.

The big clock over the castle boomed out the hour, and at the same instant there arose a roar like the voice of the surf on a Malabar shore. There was a crashing of glass almost in the room itself. Already Steinmetz was drawing the curtains closer over the windows in order to prevent the light from filtering through the interstices of the closed shutters.

'Only stones,' he said to Paul, with his grim smile; 'it might have been bullets.'

As if in corroboration of his suggestion the sharp ring of more than one firearm rang out above the dull roar of many voices.

Steinmetz crossed the room to where Etta was standing white-lipped by the fire. Her clenched hand was gripping Maggie's wrist. She was half hidden behind her cousin. Maggie was looking at Paul. Etta was obviously conscious of Steinmetz's gaze and approach.

'I asked you before to tell me all you knew,' he said. 'You refused. Will you do it now?'

Etta met his glance for a moment, shrugged her shoulders, and turned her back on him. Paul was standing in the open doorway, with his back turned towards them—alone. The palace had never looked so vast as it did at that moment—brilliantly lighted, gorgeous, empty.

Through the hail of blows on the stout doors, the rattle of stones at the windows, the Prince could hear yells of execration and the wild laughter that is bred of destruction. He turned and entered the room. His face was grey and terrible.

'They have no chance,' he said, 'of effecting an entrance by force, the lower windows are barred. They have no ladders, Steinmetz and I have seen to that. We have been expecting this for some days.'

He turned towards Steinmetz as if seeking confirmation. The din was increasing. When the German spoke he had to shout.

'We can beat them back if we like. We can shoot them down from the windows. But'—he paused, shrugged his shoulders and laughed—'what will you? this Prince will not shoot his father's serfs.'

'We must leave you,' went on Paul. 'We must beware of treachery. Whatever happens we shall not leave the house. If the worst comes, we make our last stand in this room. Whatever happens, stay here till we come.'

He left the room, followed by Steinmetz. There were only three doors in the impregnable stone walls; the great entrance, a side door for use in times of deep snow, and the small concealed entrance by which the Starosta was in the habit of reaching his masters.

For a moment the two men stood at the head of the stairs listening to the wild commotion. They were turning to descend the state stairs when a piercing shriek, immediately drowned by a yell of triumph, broke the silence of the interior of the castle. There was a momentary stillness followed by another shriek.

'They are in!' said Steinmetz. 'The side door.'

And the two men looked at each other with wide eyes full of knowledge.

As they ran to the foot of the broad staircase the tramp of scuffling feet, the roar of angry voices, came through the passages from the back of curtained doorways. The servants' quarters seemed to be pandemonium. The sounds approached.

'Half-way up!' said Paul, and they ran half-way up the broad staircase side by side. There they stood and waited.

In a moment the baize doors were burst open and a scuffling mass of men and women poured into the hall—a very sewer of humanity.

A yell of execration signalled their recognition of the Prince.

'They are mad!' said Steinmetz, as the crowd surged forward towards the stairs with waving arms and the dull gleam of steel; with wild faces turned upward, wild mouths bellowing hatred and murder.

'It is a chance—it may stop them!' said Steinmetz.

His arm was outstretched steadily. A loud report, a little puff of smoke shooting upward to the gilded ceiling, and for one brief moment the crowd stood still, watching one of their ring-leaders, who was turning and twisting on his side half a dozen steps from the bottom.

The man writhed in silence with his hand to his breast and the crowd stood aghast. He held up his hand and gazed at it with a queer stupefaction. The blood dripped from his fingers. Then his chin went up as if someone was gripping the back of his neck. He turned over slowly and rolled to the bottom of the stairs.

Then Paul raised his voice.

‘Listen to me,’ he said.

But he got no further, for someone shot at him from the background, over the frantic heads of the others, and missed him. The bullet lodged in the wall at the head of the stairs, in the jamb of the gorgeous doorway. It is there to-day.

There was a yell of hatred and an ugly charge towards the stairs; but the sight of two revolvers held them there—motionless for a few moments. Those in front pushed back, while the shouters in the safe background urged them forward by word and gesture.

Two men holding a hundred in check. But one of the two was a Prince, which makes all the difference, and will continue to make that difference, despite halfpenny journalism, until the end of the world.

‘What do you want?’ cried Paul.

‘Oh, I will wait,’ he shouted in the next pause. ‘There is plenty of time—when you are tired of shouting.’

Several of them proceeded to tell him what they wanted. An old story, too stale for repetition here. Paul recognised in the din of many voices the tinkling arguments of the professional agitator all the world over, the cry of ‘Equality—Equality!’ when men are obviously created unequal.

‘Look out!’ said Paul; ‘I believe they are going to make a rush.’

All the while the foremost men were edging towards the stairs, while the densely packed throng at the back were struggling among themselves. In the passages behind, some were yelling and screaming with a wild intonation which Steinmetz recognised. He had been through the Commune.

‘Those fellows at the back have been killing someone,’ he said; ‘I can tell by their voices. They are drunk with the sight of blood.’

Some new orator gained the ears of the rabble at this moment, and the ill-kempt heads swayed from side to side.

'It is useless,' he cried, 'telling him what you want. He will not give it you. Go and take it. Go and take it, little fathers; that is the only way.'

Steinmetz raised his hand and peered down into the crowd, looking for the man of eloquence, and the voice was hushed.

At this moment, however, the yelling increased, and through the doorway leading to the servants' quarters came a stream of men—bloodstained, ragged, torn. They were waving arms and implements above their heads.

'Down with the aristocrats! kill them—kill them!' they were shrieking.

A little volley of firearms further excited them. But vodka is not a good thing to shoot upon, and Paul stood untouched, waiting, as he had said, until they were tired of shouting.

'Now,' yelled Steinmetz to him in English, 'we must go. We can make a stand at the head of the stairs, then the doorway, then—'

He shrugged his shoulders. 'Then—the end,' he added as they moved up the stairs step by step, backwards.

'My very good friend,' he went on, 'at the door we must begin to shoot them down. It is our only chance. It is, moreover, our duty towards the ladies.'

'There is one alternative,' answered Paul.

'The Moscow Doctor.'

'Yes.'

'They may turn,' said Paul; 'they are just in that humour.'

The new-comers were the most dangerous. They were forcing their way to the front. There was no doubt that, as soon as they could penetrate the densely-packed mob, they would charge up the stairs, even in face of a heavy fire. The reek of vodka was borne up in the heated atmosphere, mingled with the nauseating odour of filthy clothing.

'Go,' said Steinmetz, 'and put on your doctor's clothes. I can keep them back for a few minutes.'

There was no time to be lost. Paul slipped away, leaving Steinmetz alone at the summit of the state stairway, standing grimly, revolver in hand.

In the drawing-room Paul found Maggie, alone.

'Where is Etta?' he asked.

'She left the room some time ago.'

'But I told her to stay,' said Paul.

To this Maggie made no answer. She was looking at him with an anxious scrutiny.

‘Did they shoot at you?’ she asked.

‘Yes; but not straight,’ he answered, with a little laugh as he hurried on.

In a few moments he was back in the drawing-room, a different man in the rough, stained clothes of the Moscow Doctor. The din on the stairs was louder. Steinmetz was almost in the doorway. He was shooting economically, picking his men.

With an effort Paul dragged one or two heavy pieces of furniture across the room, in the form of a rough barricade. He pointed to the hearthrug where Maggie was to stand.

‘Ready!’ he shouted to Steinmetz. ‘Come.’

The German ran in, and Paul closed the barricade.

The rabble poured in at the open door, screaming and shouting. Bloodstained, ragged, wild with the madness of murder, they crowded to the barricade. There they stopped, gazing stupidly at Paul.

‘The Moscow Doctor—the Moscow Doctor!’ passed from lip to lip. It was the women who shouted it the loudest. Like the wind through a forest it swept out of the room and down the stairs. Those crowding up pushed on and uttered the words as they came. The room was packed with them.

‘Yes!’ shouted Steinmetz at the top of his great voice, ‘and the Prince!’

He knew the note to strike, and struck with a sure hand. The barricade was torn aside, and the people swept forward falling on their knees, grovelling at Paul’s feet, kissing the hem of his garment, seizing his strong hands in theirs.

It was a mighty harvest. That which is sown in the people’s heart bears a thousandfold at last.

‘Get them out of the place—open the big doors,’ said Paul to Steinmetz. He stood cold and grave among them.

Some of them were already sneaking towards the door—the ringleaders, the talkers from the towns—mindful of their own necks in this change of feeling.

Steinmetz hustled them out, bidding them take their dead with them. Some of the servants re-appeared, peeping white-faced behind curtains. When the last villager had crossed the threshold, these ran forward to close and bar the great doors.

‘No,’ said Paul, from the head of the stairs, ‘leave them open.’

So the great doors stood defiantly open. The lights of the state staircase flared out over the village as the peasants crept crestfallen to their cottages. They glanced up shamefacedly, but they had no word to say.

Steinmetz, in the drawing-room, looked at Paul with his resigned semi-humorous shrug of the shoulders.

‘Touch-and-go, *mein Lieber*,’ he said.

‘Yes; an end of Russia for us,’ answered the Prince.

He moved towards the door leading through to the old castle.

‘I am going to look for Etta,’ he said.

‘And I,’ said Steinmetz, going to the other entrance, ‘am going to see who opened the side-door.’

CHAPTER XLIII.

BEHIND THE VEIL.

‘WILL you come with me?’ said Paul to Maggie. ‘I will send the servants to put this room to rights.’

Maggie followed him out of the room, and together they went through the passages, calling Etta and looking for her. There was an air of gloom and chilliness in the rooms of the old castle. The outline of the great stones, dimly discernible through the wall-paper, was singularly suggestive of a fortress thinly disguised.

‘I suppose,’ said Paul, ‘that Etta lost her nerve.’

‘Yes,’ answered Maggie doubtfully. ‘I think it was that.’

Paul went on. He carried a lamp in one steady hand.

‘We shall probably find her in one of these rooms,’ he said. ‘It is so easy to lose oneself among the passages and staircases.’

They passed on through the great smoking-room, with its hunting trophies. The lynx, with its face of Claude de Chauxville, grinned at them darkly from its pedestal.

Halfway down the stairs leading to the side door they met Steinmetz coming hastily up. His face was white and drawn with horror.

‘You must not go down here,’ he said, in a husky voice, barring the passage with his arm.

‘Why not?’

‘Go up again!’ said Steinmetz breathlessly. ‘You must not go down here.’

Paul laid his hand on the broad arm stretched across the stairway. For a moment it almost appeared to be a physical struggle, then Steinmetz stepped aside.

'I beg of you,' he said, 'not to go down.'

And Paul went on, followed by Steinmetz, and behind them, Maggie. At the foot of the stairs a broader passage led to the side door, and from this other passages opened into the servants' quarters, and communicated through the kitchens with the modern building.

It was evident that the door leading to the grassy slope at the back of the castle was open, for a cold wind blew up the stairs and made the lamps flicker.

At the end of the passage Paul stopped.

Steinmetz was a little behind him, holding Maggie back.

The two lamps lighted up the passage and showed the white form of the Princess Etta lying huddled up against the wall. The face was hidden, but there was no mistaking the beautiful dress and hair. It could only be Etta. Paul stooped down and looked at her, but he did not touch her. He went a few paces forward and closed the door. Beyond Etta a black form lay across the passage, all trodden under foot and dishevelled. Paul held the lamp down, and through the mud and blood De Chauxville's clear-cut features were outlined.

Death is always unmistakable, though it be shown by nothing more than a heap of muddy clothes.

Claude de Chauxville was lying across the passage. He had been trodden underfoot by the stream of maddened peasants who had entered by this door which had been opened for them, whom Steinmetz had checked at the foot of the stairs by shooting their ringleader.

De Chauxville's scalp was torn away by a blow, probably given with a spade or some blunt instrument. His hand, all muddy and bloodstained, still held a revolver. The other hand was stretched out towards Etta, who lay across his feet, crouching against the wall. Death had found and left her in an attitude of fear, shielding her bowed head from a blow with her upraised hands. Her loosened hair fell in a long wave of gold down to the bloodstained hand outstretched towards her. She was kneeling in De Chauxville's blood, which stained the stone floor of the passage.

Paul leant forward and laid his fingers on her bare arm just

below a bracelet which gleamed in the lamp-light. She was quite dead. He held a lamp close to her. There was no mark or scratch upon her arm or shoulder. The blow which had torn her hair down had killed her without any disfigurement. The silken skirt of her dress, which lay across the passage, was trampled and stained by the tread of a hundred muddy feet.

Then Paul went to Claude de Chauxville. He stooped down and slipped his skilled fingers inside the torn and mud-stained clothing. Here also was death.

Paul stood upright and looked at them as they lay, silent, motionless, with their tale untold. Maggie and Steinmetz stood watching him. He went to the door, which was of solid oak four inches thick, and examined the fastenings. There had been no damage done to bolt, or lock, or hinge. The door had been opened from the inside. He looked slowly round, measuring the distances.

‘What is the meaning of it?’ he said, at length, to Steinmetz, in a dull voice. Maggie winced at the sound of it.

Steinmetz did not answer at once, but hesitated—after the manner of a man weighing words which will never be forgotten by their hearers.

‘It seems to me,’ he said, with a slow, wise charity, the best of its kind, ‘quite clear that De Chauxville died in trying to save her—the rest must be only guesswork.’

Maggie had come forward and was standing beside him.

‘And in guessing let us be charitable—is it not so?’ he said, turning to her, with a twist of his humorous lips.

‘I suppose,’ he went on, after a little pause, ‘that Claude de Chauxville has been at the bottom of all our trouble. All his life he has been one of the stormy petrels of diplomacy. Wherever he has gone trouble has followed later. By some means he obtained sufficient mastery over the Princess to compel her to obey his orders. The means he employed were threats. He had it in his power to make mischief, and in such affairs a woman is so helpless that we may well forgive that which she may do in a moment of panic. I imagine that he frightened the poor lady into obedience to his command that she should open this door. Before dinner, when we were all in the drawing-room, I noted a little mark of dust on the white silk skirt of her dress. At the time I thought only that her maid had been careless. Perhaps you noticed it, mademoiselle? Ladies note such things.’

He turned to Maggie, who nodded her head.

‘That,’ he went on, ‘was the dust of these old passages. She had been down here. She had opened this door.’

He spread out his hands in deprecation. In his quaint Germanic way he held one hand out over the two motionless forms in mute prayer that they might be forgiven.

‘We all have our faults,’ he said; ‘who are we to judge each other. If we understood all, we might pardon. The two strongest human motives are ambition and fear. She was ruled by both. I myself have seen her under the influence of sudden panic. I have noted the working of her great ambition. She was probably deceived at every turn by that man, who was a scoundrel. He is dead, and death is understood to wipe out all debts. If I were a better man than I am, I might speak well of him. But—*ach Gott!* that man was a scoundrel. I think the good God will judge between them and forgive that poor woman. She must have repented of her action when she heard the clatter of the rioters all round the castle. I am sure she did that. I am sure she came down here to shut the door, and found Claude de Chauville here. They were probably talking together when the poor mad fools who killed them came round to this side of the castle and found them. They recognised her as the Princess. They probably mistook him for the Prince. It is what men call a series of coincidences. I wonder what God calls it.’

He broke off, and stooping down he drew the lappet of the Frenchman’s cloak gently over the marred face.

‘And let us remember,’ he said, ‘that he tried to save her. Some lives are so. At the very end a little reparation is made. In life he was her evil genius. When he died they trampled him underfoot in order to reach her. Mademoiselle, will you come?’

He took Maggie by the arm and led her gently away. She was shaking all over, but his hand was steady and wholly kind.

He led her up the narrow stairs to her own room. In the little boudoir the fire was burning brightly; the lamps were lighted, just as the maid had left them at the first alarm.

Maggie sat down, and quite suddenly she burst into tears.

Steinmetz did not leave her. He stood beside her gently stroking her shoulder with his stout fingers. He said nothing, but the grey moustache only half concealed his lips, which were twisted with a little smile full of tenderness and sympathy.

Maggie was the first to speak.

'I am all right now,' she said. 'Please do not wait any longer, and do not think me a very weak-minded person. Poor Etta!'

Steinmetz moved away towards the door.

'Yes,' he said; 'poor Etta! It is often those who get on in the world who need the world's pity most.'

At the door he stopped.

'To-morrow,' he said, 'I will take you home to England. Is that agreeable to you, mademoiselle?'

She smiled at him sadly through her tears.

'Yes, I should like that,' she said. 'This country is horrible. You are very kind to me.'

Steinmetz went downstairs and found Paul at the door talking to a young officer, who slowly dismounted and lounged into the hall, conscious of his brilliant uniform—of his own physical capacity to show off any uniform to full advantage.

He was a lieutenant in a Cossack regiment, and as he bowed to Steinmetz, whom Paul introduced, he swung off his high astrakhan cap with a flourish, showing a fair boyish face.

'Yes,' he continued to Paul in English; 'the general sent me over with a sotnia of men, and pretty hungry you will find them. We have covered the whole distance since daybreak. A report reached the old gentleman that the whole countryside was about to rise against you.'

'Who spread the report?' asked Steinmetz.

'I believe it originated down at the wharfs. It has been traced to an old man and his daughter—a sort of pedlar, I think, who took a passage down the river—but where they heard the rumour I don't know.'

Paul and Steinmetz carefully avoided looking at each other. They knew that Catrina and Stepán Lanovitch had sent back assistance.

'Of course,' said Paul, 'I am very glad to see you, but I am equally glad to inform you that you are not wanted. Steinmetz will tell you all about it, and when you are ready for dinner it will be ready for you. I will give instructions that the men be cared for.'

'Thanks. The funny thing is that I am instructed, with your approval, to put the place under martial law and take charge.'

'That will not be necessary, thanks,' answered Paul, going out of the open door to speak to the wild-looking Cossacks sent for his protection.

In Russia, as in other countries where life is cheaply held, the death formalities are small. It is only in England, where we are so careful for the individual and so careless of the type, that we have to pay for dying, and leave a mass of red-tape formalities for our friends.

While the young officer was changing his uniform for the evening finery which his servant's forethought had provided, Paul and Steinmetz hurriedly arranged what story of the evening should be given to the world. Knowing the country as they did they were enabled to tell a true tale, which was yet devoid of that small personal interest that gossips love. And all the world ever knew was that the Princess Howard Alexis was killed by the revolted peasants while attempting to escape by a side door, and that the Baron Claude de Chauxville, who was staying in the neighbourhood, met his death in attempting to save her from the fury of the mob.

On the recommendation of Karl Steinmetz, Paul placed the castle and village under martial law, and there and then gave the command to the young Cossack officer pending further instructions from his general commanding at Tver.

The officer dined with Steinmetz, and under the careful treatment of that diplomatist inaugurated a reign of military autocracy which varied pleasingly between strict discipline and boyish neglect.

Before the master of the situation had slept off the effect of his hundred-mile ride and a heavy dinner, the next morning, Steinmetz and Maggie were ready to start on their journey to England.

The breakfast was served in the room abutting the cliff in the dim light of a misty morning.

The lamps were alight on the table, and Paul was waiting when Maggie came down cloaked for her journey. Steinmetz had breakfasted.

They said good morning, and managed to talk of ordinary things until Maggie was supplied with coffee and toast and a somewhat heavy, manly helping of a breakfast-dish. Then came a silence.

Paul broke it at length with an effort, standing as it were on the edge of the forbidden topic.

'Steinmetz will take you all the way,' he said, 'and then come back to me. You can safely trust yourself to his care.'

'Yes,' answered the girl, looking at the food set before her with a helpless stare. 'It is not that. Can I safely trust Etta's memory to your judgment? You are very stern, Paul. I think you might easily misjudge her. Men do not always understand a woman's temptations.'

Paul had not sat down. He walked away to the window, and stood there looking out into the gloomy mists.

'It is not because she was my cousin,' said Maggie from the table; 'it is because she was a woman leaving her memory to be judged by two men who are both—hard.'

Paul neither looked round nor answered.

'When a woman has to form her own life, and renders it a prominent one, she usually makes a huge mistake of it,' said the girl.

She waited a moment, and then she pleaded once more, hastily, for she heard a step approaching.

'If you only understood everything you might think differently—it is because you cannot understand.'

Then Paul turned round slowly.

'No,' he said, 'I cannot understand it, and I do not think that I ever shall.'

And Steinmetz came into the room.

In a few minutes the sleigh bearing Steinmetz and Maggie disappeared into the gloom, closely followed by a couple of Cossacks acting as guard and carrying despatches.

So Etta Sydney Bamborough—the Princess Howard Alexis—came back after all to her husband, lying in a nameless grave in the churchyard by the Volga at Tver. Within the white walls—beneath the shadow of the great spangled cupola—they await the Verdict, almost side by side.

CHAPTER XLIV.

KISMET.

BETWEEN Brandon in Suffolk and Thetford in Norfolk runs a quiet river, the Little Ouse, where few boats break the stillness of the water. On either bank stand whispering beech-trees, and so low is the music of the leaves, that the message of Ely's distant bells floats through them on a quiet evening as far as Brandon and beyond it.

Three years after Etta's death, in the glow of an April sunset, a Canadian canoe was making its stealthy way up the river. The paddle crept in and out so gently, so lazily and peacefully, that the dabchicks and other waterfowl did not cease their chatter of nests and other April matters as the canoe glided by.

So quiet, indeed, was its progress that Karl Steinmetz—suddenly white-headed, as strong old men are apt to find themselves—did not heed its approach. He was sitting on the bank with a gun, a little rifle lying on the grass beside him. He was half-asleep in the enjoyment of a large Havana cigar. The rays of the setting sun peeping through the lower branches made him blink lazily like a large good-natured cat.

He turned his head slowly, with a hunter's consciousness of the approach of someone, and contemplated the canoe with a sense of placid satisfaction.

The small craft was passing in the shadow of a great tree—stealing over the dark unruffled depth. A girl dressed in white, with a large diaphanous white hat and a general air of brisk English daintiness, was paddling slowly and with no great skill.

'A picture,' said Steinmetz to himself with Teutonic deliberation. '*Gott im Himmel!* what a pretty picture to make an old man young.'

Then his grey eyes opened suddenly and he rose to his feet.

'Coloss-a-al!' he muttered. He dragged from his head a lamentable old straw hat and swept a courteous bow.

'Mademoiselle,' he said, 'ah, what happiness! After three years!'

Maggie stopped and looked at him with troubled eyes; all the colour slowly left her face.

'What are you doing here?' she asked. And there was something like fear in her voice.

'No harm, mademoiselle, but good. I have come down from big game to vermin. I have here a saloon rifle. I wait till a water-rat comes and then I shoot him.'

The canoe had drifted closer to the land, the paddle trailing in the water.

'You are looking at my white hairs,' he went on in a sudden need of conversation. 'Please bring your boat a little nearer.'

The paddle twisted lazily in the water like a fish's tail.

'Hold tight,' he said, reaching down.

With a little laugh he lifted the canoe and its occupant far up on to the bank.

'Despite my white hairs,' he said, with a tap of both hands on his broad chest.

'I attach no importance to them,' she answered, taking his proffered hand and stepping over the light bulwark. 'I have grey ones myself. I am getting old too.'

'How old?' he asked, looking down at her with his old bluntness.

'Twenty-eight.'

'Ah, they are summers,' he said; 'mine have turned to winters. Will you sit here where I was sitting? See, I will spread this rug for your white dress.'

Maggie paused, looking through the trees towards the sinking sun. The light fell on her face and showed one or two lines which had not been there before. It showed a patient tenderness in the steady eyes which had always been there—which *Catrina* had noticed in the stormy days that were past.

'I cannot stay long,' she replied. 'I am with the *Faneaux* at Brandon for a few days. They dine at seven.'

'Ah, her ladyship is a good friend of mine. You remember her *Charity Ball* in town, when it was settled that you should come to *Osterno*. A strange world, *mademoiselle*—a very strange world, so small, and yet so large and bare for some of us.'

Maggie looked at him. Then she sat down.

'Tell me,' she said, 'all that has happened since then.'

'I went back,' answered *Steinmetz*, 'and we were duly exiled from Russia. It was sure to come. We were too dangerous. Altogether too quixotic for an autocracy. For myself I did not mind, but it hurt Paul.'

There was a little pause, while the water lapped and whispered at their feet.

'I heard,' said Maggie, at length, in a measured voice, 'that he had gone abroad for big game.'

'Yes—to India.'

'He did not go to America?' inquired Maggie indifferently. She was idly throwing fragments of wood into the river.

'No,' answered *Steinmetz*, looking straight in front of him. 'No, he did not go to America.'

'And you?'

‘I—oh, I stayed at home. I have taken a house. It is behind the trees. You cannot see it. I live at peace with all men and pay my bills every week. Sometimes Paul comes and stays with me. Sometimes I go and stay with him in London or in Scotland. I smoke and shoot water-rats, and watch the younger generation making the same mistakes that we made in our time. You have heard that my country is in order again. They have remembered me. For my sins they have made me a count. Bon Dieu ! I do not mind. They may make me a prince if it pleases them.’

He was watching her face beneath his grim old eyebrows.

‘These details bore you,’ he said.

‘No.’

‘When Paul and I are together we talk of a new heaven and a new Russia. But it will not come in our time. We are only the sowers, and the harvest is not yet. But I tell Paul that he has not sown wild oats, nor sour grapes, nor thistles.’

He paused, and the expression of his face changed to one of semi-humorous gravity.

‘Mademoiselle,’ he went on, ‘it has been my lot to love the Prince like a son. It has been my lot to stand helplessly by while he passed through many troubles. Perhaps the good God gave him all his troubles at first. Do you think so ?’

Maggie was looking straight in front of her across the quiet river.

‘Perhaps so,’ she said.

Steinmetz also stared in front of him during a little silence. The common thoughts of two minds may well be drawn together by the contemplation of a common object. Then he turned towards her.

‘It will be a happiness for him to see you,’ he said quietly.

Maggie ceased breaking small branches and throwing them into the river. She ceased all movement, and scarcely seemed to breathe.

‘What do you mean ?’ she asked.

‘He is staying with me here.’

Maggie glanced towards the canoe. She drew a short sharp breath, but she did not move.

‘Mademoiselle,’ said Steinmetz earnestly, ‘I am an old man, and in my time I have dabbled pretty deeply in trouble. But taking it all round, even my life has had its compensations. And

I have seen lives which, taken as mere mortal existences—without looking to the hereafter at all—have been quite worth the living. There is much happiness in life to make up for the rest. But that happiness must be firmly held. It is so easily slipped through the fingers. A little irresolution—a little want of moral courage—a little want of self-confidence—a little pride and it is lost. You follow me?

Maggie nodded. There was a great tenderness in her eyes—such a tenderness as, resting on men, may bring them nearer to the angels.

Steinmetz laid his large hand over hers.

'Mademoiselle,' he went on, 'I believe that the good God sent you along this lonely river in your boat. Paul leaves me to-morrow. His arrangements are to go to India and shoot tigers. He will sail in a week. There are things of which we never speak together—there is one name that is never mentioned. Since Osterno you have avoided meeting him. God knows I am not asking for him anything that he would be afraid to ask for himself. But he also has his pride. He will not force himself in where he thinks his presence unwelcome.'

Steinmetz rose somewhat ponderously and stood looking down at her. He did not, however, succeed in meeting her eyes.

'Mademoiselle,' he said, 'I beg of you most humbly—most respectfully—to come through the garden with me towards the house, so that Paul may at least know that you are here.'

He moved away and stood for a moment with his back turned to her looking towards the house. The crisp rustle of her dress came to him as she rose to her feet.

Without looking round he walked slowly on. The path through the trees was narrow, two could not walk abreast. After a few yards Steinmetz emerged on to a large sloping lawn with flower-beds, and a long low house above it. On the covered terrace a man sat writing at a table. He was surrounded by papers, and the pen in his large firm hand moved rapidly over the sheet before him.

'We still administer the estate,' said Steinmetz in a low voice. 'From our exile we still sow our seed.'

They approached over the mossy turf, and presently Paul looked up—a strong face—stern and self-contained; the face of a man who would always have a purpose in life, who would never be petty in thought or deed.

For a moment he did not seem to recognise them. Then he rose, and the pen fell on the flags of the terrace.

‘It is mademoiselle!’ said Steinmetz, and no other word was spoken.

Maggie walked on in a sort of unconsciousness. She only knew that they were all acting an inevitable part, written for them in the great libretto of life. She never noticed that Steinmetz had left her side, that she was walking across the lawn alone.

Paul came to meet her, and took her hand in silence. There was so much to say that words seemed suddenly valueless; there was so little to say, that they were unnecessary.

For that which these two had to tell each other cannot be told in minutes nor yet in years; it cannot even be told in a lifetime, for it is endless, and it runs through eternity.

THE END.

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ORIGINATOR OF THE SPRAY TREATMENT,

Founder and Senior Surgeon of the 'Home Hospital,' 10 Dean Street, Soho, London.

(Continued from October Number.)

Another allopathic practitioner, Mr. T. W. Brown, a surgeon in the Indian Army, stationed at Kotri Sind suffering from distressing prostatic enlargement, experienced, what he probably expected, that the customary resources were useless, and, turning from the failing notabilities to Dr. David Jones (whose book he had read),² was likewise cured by the spray treatment. He, too, similarly conveyed his grateful acknowledgments by a legacy, which, however, owing to an informality, was not received. But for the purpose the significance is the same.

Starting in his professional career with a specialty which had been professionally neglected — because, perhaps, unpromising of social distinction and official eminence — Dr. Jones seems to have acquired, in respect of bladder diseases, a minute knowledge and a delicacy of perception to which less devoted students could hardly attain. At an early period of his investigations, perceiving the inadequacy of the means in vogue, he sought for really curative agencies and an effective method of applying them. In this regard, the practice of homeopathy would probably be suggestive. The intelligent reader knows that while allopathy, the orthodox procedure, proceeds indirectly by exciting counter diseases, homeopathy addresses itself immediately to the failing part. Drugs taken through the stomach could have but a remote, and hardly even secondary, effect on an individualised organ which, to be effectually treated, must be directly reached. Hence the invention of the spray, a mechanism for penetrating to the interior of the viscus, where it showers specific medicaments. The agencies chiefly relied on are specifics of Dr. Jones's pathological discovery which he has not as yet disclosed, a reticence for which he has been subjected to reproach.

Apart from the pro-



Dr. David Jones

erty value of a discovery which rightly belongs to the discoverer, the doctor follows traditional example. New methods and fresh agencies, understood by those who have devised and developed them, and who possess the finesse and the delicacy required by the morbid conditions they are adapted for, would often prove injurious in unskillful hands, and be exposed to discredit without adequate appreciation and ripened demonstration. The late Mr Morell Mackenzie, editing the 'Pharmacopœia of the Hospital for Diseases of the Throat,' in which the experiences of the hospital are conveyed after a lengthened secrecy, aptly quotes the distinguished Jonathan Hutchinson: — 'In the early stage of any department of knowledge, it is almost a matter of necessity that it should be in the hands of a few. But it is the highest privilege of those who thus devote themselves to the reclamations of new spots of territory to be able, after a while, to hand them over to the commonwealth, to prove that they are now cultivated and well worthy of annexation.'

(To be continued.)

² 'Diseases of the Bladder and Prostate,' by David Jones, M.D. London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co.; C. Mitchell & Co.

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[P.T.O.]

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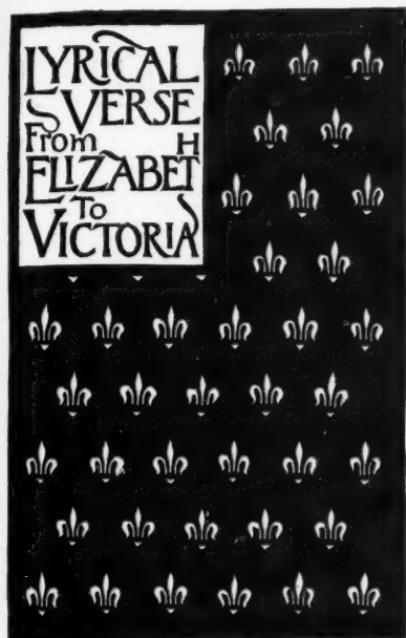
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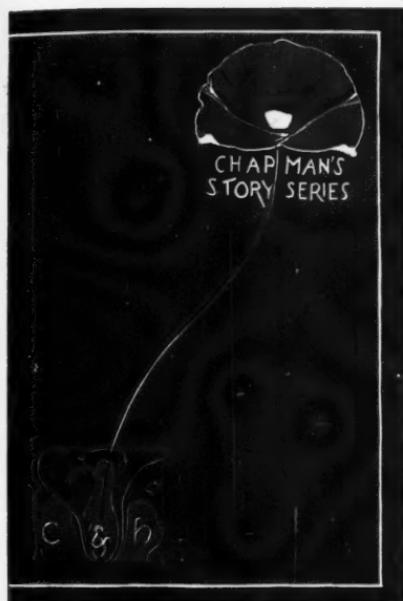
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